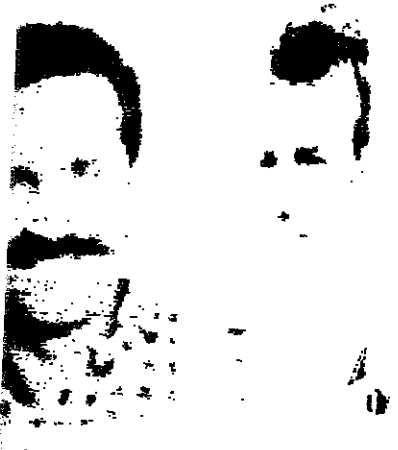


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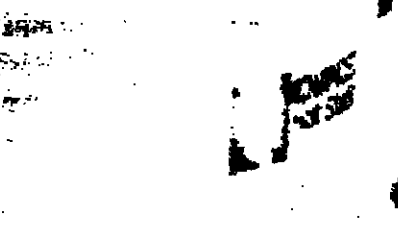
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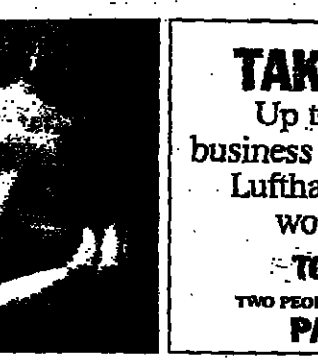
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Appraisal system 'to get teeth' Teachers face sack if their pupils fail

By JOHN O'LEARY AND PHILIP WEBSTER

TEACHERS could be sacked over their pupils' poor results for the first time since the Victorian school boards, under plans put forward by Gillian Shephard yesterday.

The Education Secretary told a news conference that the system of appraising teachers would be given teeth, so that the worst could be removed from the classroom. And as well as becoming accountable for children's results, teachers would be judged on their ability to maintain discipline and "teach interestingly".

The initiative was among a series of measures announced by Mrs Shephard and John Major, including A-level reforms, new national achievement targets and the threat of "hit squads" taking over from poor education authorities.

On teachers' appraisals, Mrs Shephard said that children's results were a key indicator of a teacher's competence, and would form part of a new framework. But head teachers said the plan would distort the system without enabling incompetent staff — the Chief Inspector of Schools has said that there are 13,000 — to be sacked more quickly.

Union leaders were also enraged. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said that the threat could bring a new wave of boycotts to the classroom, with union conferences at Easter likely to hear calls for action.

He said: "To call this latest measure Victorian or Draconian is an insult to Victoria and Dracula [sic]. The stupidity of this is unbelievable and there will be a backlash. Years of development of teacher appraisal are to be swept aside in the interests of a few seconds of sound-bite in the Conservative Party's increasingly desperate attempts to catch the big idea on education."

Other measures announced yesterday as part of the Government's campaign to increase "parent power" included requiring schools to set targets for each age group, comparing their performance with similar schools and national averages. Parents would be kept informed through simple school reports, and would have access to new league tables of seven and 14-year-olds' test results.

Targets already exist for GCSEs. A levels and their vocational equivalents. The latest proposals would add to the list English, mathematics and science test results for seven, 11 and 14-year-olds.

"For the first time the performance of schools and their pupils will be an open book — no longer a sealed volume," Mrs Shephard said.

Mr Major also disclosed that the 20 lowest-performing education authorities — all but one Labour-controlled — would be inspected and if they failed, "hit squads" would take over.

Calderdale, which covers the Riddlesdale School in Halifax, has already been inspected and a report is expected in the next fortnight. Other authorities at risk include the London boroughs of Islington, Lambeth, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Barking & Dagenham, Newham, Haringey, Greenwich and Lewisham, as well as Kingston-upon-Hull, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sandwell, Middlesbrough, Manchester, Barnsley, Bradford, Salford and Wolverhampton.

Mr Major said: "If you want to level up standards and move towards excellence for all, you need to expose what has gone wrong, even if in doing so you sometimes have uncomfortable periods when people ask why things are not better. But we have done that and it was the right thing to do. We have all the levers now to raise standards."

But David Blunkett, the Shadow Education and Employment Secretary, said that Labour had proposed "improvement teams" for failing local authorities and had been ridiculed for proposing national literacy targets. "Now two weeks later, we have another U-turn from ministers as they accept yet another Labour proposal to raise standards."

Dorrell demoted after Scottish gaffe

By OUR POLITICAL EDITOR

STEPHEN DORRELL was publicly slapped down by John Major yesterday and downgraded as the Conservatives' special campaigner on the constitution.

The demotion — which came after the Health Secretary's gaffe over how the Conservatives would treat Labour's proposed Scottish Parliament — provoked scarcely concealed glee among rightwingers who are increasingly suspicious of Mr Dorrell's advances in anticipation of a possible Tory leadership election.

The rebuff came at a pre-election press conference called to launch the Government's latest education reforms. Asked why Mr Dorrell should have a constitutional role which had nothing to do with his department, Mr Major curtly replied: "Responsibility for the constitution rests with the Prime Minister and the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales."

Mr Dorrell has, however, made several recent speeches on the constitution and he appeared on television and radio to talk about devolution issues after being given the job in the summer.

Later in the Commons, Mr Major made no attempt to defend Mr Dorrell when Tony Blair had accused him of "disowning" his Health Secretary. MPs drew a swift contrast with the way Mr Major had risen to the support of Michael Portillo when he was attacked by a Labour MP over the handling of the Royal Yacht affair.

Tory sources admitted that Michael Forsyth, the Scottish secretary, had been angry about Mr Dorrell's interview with *The Scotsman* on Monday, when he suggested that a future Tory government might abolish a Scottish Parliament if Labour set one up. It contradicted Mr Forsyth's line — endorsed by the Prime Minister yesterday — that such a parliament would be continued on page 2, col 5.

Simon Jenkins, page 18



Ralph Fiennes in London last night after hearing of his nomination as Best Actor

British wartime romance scoops Oscar nominations

By GILES WHITTELL
IN LOS ANGELES
AND DALYA ALBERGE

A TALE of love and treachery in wartime, *The English Patient*, yesterday became the most filmed British film in Hollywood history, winning 12 Oscar nominations.

Ralph Fiennes, Kristin Scott Thomas and the film's director, Anthony Minghella, led the transatlantic invasion of Tinseltown, scooping up nominations in their categories as Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Film and Best Director.

The achievement beats the previous British best, *Gandhi's* 11 nominations in 1982, but falls short of *Gone with the Wind's* 13 in 1939, and Bette Davis's *All About Eve* of 1950 which attracted 14.

American pop idols were snubbed in favour of English stage talent as Brenda Blethyn and Emily Watson won places on the Best Actress shortlist for their leading roles in *Secrets and Lies* and *Breaking the Waves* respectively. Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies* won an impressive five nominations, including Best Director. Madonna missed out despite her recent Golden Globe for *Evita*, and Courtney Love, the rock diva, was overlooked despite critical acclaim for her role in *The People vs Larry Flynt*. The heavily promoted *Evita* won five nominations, including one for the song *You Must Love Me*, by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber. Jerry Maguire also won five, among them a Best Actor nomination for Tom Cruise.

The English Patient, which opens in Britain on March 14 after taking \$40 million (£25 million) at the US box office in 12 weeks, was inspired by Michael Ondaatje's poetic novel which won the 1992 Booker Prize. Anthony Minghella, who learnt the screenwriting trade in early episodes of the BBC children's programme *Grange Hill*, yesterday recalled the four-year struggle to find investors.

Speaking from Australia, Mr Minghella said: "It's ironic to talk about it being the perfect film for the Academy when no-one thought it was the perfect film for an audience."

Fiennes, 34, was picked for the Best Actor category, while his co-star, Kristin Scott Thomas, who made her name in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, was nominated for Best Actress.

This year is already shaping up as the one when Holly



Scott Thomas co-stars in *The English Patient*

Tell all about murder, judge asks father and his sons

By PAUL WILKINSON

A FATHER and his two teenage sons convicted of plotting to kill their domineering mother were yesterday asked by a judge to confess their parts in the crime.

Mr Justice Alliot said at the end of the month-long trial that he "still did not know the whole truth" of the conspiracy to murder Eve Howells, a religious education teacher.

After the jury had returned guilty verdicts on the murder charges, he took the unprecedented step of asking defence counsel to take further instructions from David Howells and his sons Glenn, 17, and John, 15, so that he could make recommendations on the length of sentences.

Leeds Crown Court was told that Mrs Howells, 48, had been battered to death with a stone mason's hammer as she sat writing letters on the floor of her sitting room in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. Within 24 hours of the killing on August 31, 1995, police became suspicious about the boys' story that they had come home to find their mother dead, apparently a victim of a bungled robbery.

Forensic evidence indicated that both boys had been there at the moment of the killing. Although Mr Howells was playing in a darts match three miles away, detectives believed he had orchestrated the killing by one or both of his sons. Clandestine taping of conversations between the three of them disclosed a plot, but in court Mr Howells denied any involvement.

Glenn admitted the killing, pleading guilty to manslaughter because of the provocation on his mother's sustained mental and emotional abuse. John admitted only that he had disposed of the murder weapon and Glenn's blood-stained clothing.

Yesterday Mr Justice Alliot told the three defence QCs: "You are fully conscious that, in the light of the verdicts, I have no option but to impose sentences of detention at Her Majesty's pleasure on the two boys and life imprisonment on the father."

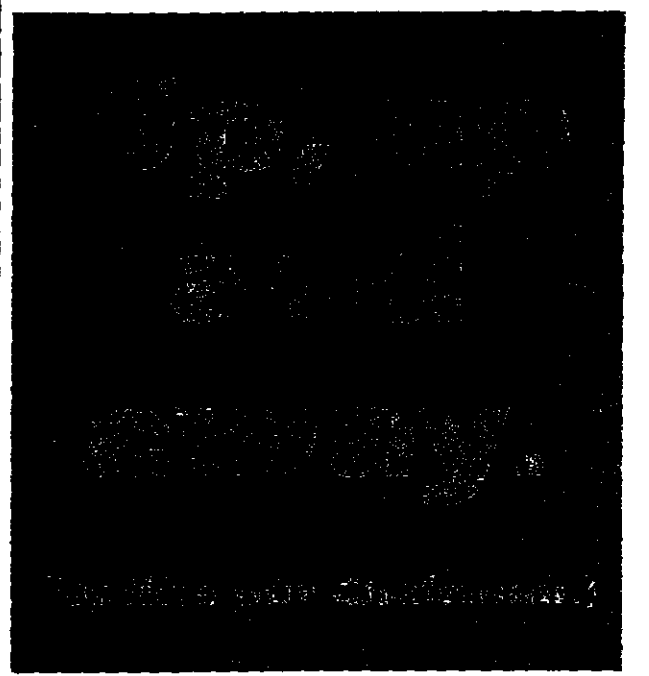
"But I am also fully conscious that it is part of my duty to give a recommendation to the Home Secretary through the Lord Chief Justice as to the minimum period to be served to express retribution and deterrence. I feel that even now, although I endorse the jury's verdicts, I still do not know the whole truth."

"I am going to do something quite unusual. I would ordinarily invite each of you to address me on the period of my recommendation, but I am going to put that back in the hope that further instructions can be obtained from your respective clients which will put me in a better position to do justice to the three of them."

The judge will hear counsel this afternoon before passing sentence.

□ Anne Rafferty, QC, the head of the Criminal Bar Association, said that without having spoken to the judge, his intervention appeared to be a sympathetic attempt to "fill in some gaps" before he decided on the tariff — the recommended period to be served (Frances Gibb writes).

His recommendation goes to Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, who then advises the Home Secretary, Michael Howard.



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Italy gives tenor red card for off-key cabaret role

By ROBIN YOUNG

THE man who was to have sung the Italian national anthem at tonight's World Cup match at Wembley has been dropped after the country's Ambassador objected to newspaper photographs of him singing *Nessun Dorma* nude on a table top.

Alessandro Bernardi, a Venetian-born cabaret artist and former dishwasher, is to be substituted after Dr Paolo Gallì complained that he might not be an entirely fitting representative for the nation at such an important fixture.

The Football Association confirmed last night that it had received a letter from the Ambassador, Signor Bernardi, who now lives in Camberwell, south London, had been booked to perform the rousing *Fratelli d'Italia* before Michael Ball sings *God Save the Queen* in front of a packed stadium and a global TV audience of about 50 million viewers.

Signor Bernardi got his first big break appearing in advertisements for Worthington beer on television, singing with a mouthful of ping-pong balls and juggling guitars. His repertoire also includes operatic excerpts and punk songs set to flamenco music.

Sunday's *News of the World*, though, disclosed that for a finale Signor Bernardi is apt to strip to his socks before belting out his version of Luciano Pavarotti's greatest hit, *Nessun Dorma* from Puccini's opera *Turandot*, the tenor aria which became internationally known as the World Cup's official hymn.

Signor Bernardi, who had intended to borrow his brother-in-law's wedding outfit for tonight's appearance, was to have made the appearance for nothing more than a free ride to the ground, match tickets for himself and a friend, and admission to the VIP reception.

He said last night: "I was going to do this for the honour. It is a terrible disappointment. I intended to do my best, and I am sure my appearance would have been a success. I would have been fully dressed for the occasion."

An FA spokesman said: "It was the Italian Embassy who first suggested him and it is their decision that he should now not appear. They felt his cabaret work made him inappropriate for the task. A replacement is still being sought." An Italian Embassy spokesman said: "There are many fine singers from Italy. We must be able to find an excellent one who keeps his clothes on."

Tickets for the match are sold out and changing hands for up to £300.

Match previews, pages 44 and 48

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Unwanted best wishes upset the birthday beast



Skinner: caricature conceals a tragedy

IT WAS Dennis Skinner's birthday yesterday. The Beast of Bolsover turned 65, and puce. Skinner was ambushed by the Prime Minister and MPs went wild.

Who has never been ambushed by a kindly intended surprise? Friends mean well, but we remember with mixed feelings a birthday we wanted to forget. To be the butt of anyone's joke inspires unease, but when the butt is a socialist working-class hero, the joke is a Conservative Prime Minister, and the nation's television cameras are recording every facial twitch, the unease is great.

Still, it was a neat ambush. Puke-faced Tim Devlin (C, Stockton S) asked John Major

what began as a poodling backbench question about the wonderfully increased incomes pensioners enjoy under the Tories. Reporters shut notebooks. Tony Blair - new Labour, no smile - stared at the rafter.

Then Devlin's question took a surprise turn: "And will this not comfort the Hon Member for Bolsover on his sixty-fifth birthday - today?"

Tories roared. Labour whined. Skinner turned his face to stone.

For his special day he was wearing the dark trousers, cream shirt, grey sports jacket and scarlet tie which, like his opinions, he has for a quarter century changed only to wash and darn. The hair, now

streaked with grey, was slicked back in the style he must have adopted in the 50s, touring the pubs of Clay Cross doing Elvis impersonations. He looked, as ever, like a Teddy-boy dad on parents' day.

He scowled. The cheering grew. He tried to chat to Andrew Mackinlay beside him: the would-be Beast of Thurrock who, being a Southerner, is undone by being able to laugh at himself. Could Dennis laugh at himself? He could not. Only a nambly-

pamby bourgeois revisionist laughs at himself.

"Smile!" shouted the Tories. For Dennis this was reason enough not to. "Madam Speaker," said the PM. "I would like to wish him a very happy birthday ... wrong though he has been on almost every issue during his long parliamentary career ... and the rest was lost in laughter. "He'll probably accuse me of fiddling the figures," Major grinned. "I hope he smiles before the end of the year." Dennis looked as though he

might never smile again. He was forced to speak, now, and rose.

Mr Skinner really only has one speech, though it emerges in many forms. "It's the same the whole world over/Ain't it all a bleeding shame?/It's the rich wot gets the 'blame." Yesterday's version was an anti-Tory rant featuring Major as a floor-sweeper at the bank. Skinner's face was purple.

All laughed, as we do at these "local characters" life produces. But like most local characters, the caricature Dennis Skinner has become conceals a tragedy. Beneath the facade of rough-diamond and redoubtable thug lies a

now-bitter man, once a clever, sensitive boy and bookish youth, ill-suited to his Midlands coal-mining circumstances, who took refuge in Marxist theology and stage-Bolshevism, was allowed aside not by the Tories but by his own party, and in his retirement from serious politics has found some kind of a sour niche as a political snarler and scowling Commons entertainer. He and the Premier facing him share more in origin and temperament than either supposes, but Mr Major has had more love, and luck.

"Curmudgeon!" said the PM.

At the word curmudgeon, a great miracle occurred. Sir Edward Heath smiled.

Labour to cut role of unpaid magistrates

Lay magistrates could be stripped of their power to hear contested cases in the youth courts under Labour Party plans to tackle crime by young people.

In an attempt to cut delays, and bring a more hard-headed attitude towards juvenile offending, stipendiary magistrates and circuit judges would hear not-guilty pleas in the youth courts. Lay magistrates would only sentence convicted youngsters and deal with guilty pleas, according to proposals published yesterday.

TV licence move

Owners of second homes will have to buy additional television licences for each property from April 1, bringing in up to £18 million a year extra revenue for the BBC. Sets in caravans, boats and mobile homes will be exempt, the Heritage Department said.

Store doctors

Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, has ruled out the prospect of supermarkets employing family doctors to offer healthcare to customers. He said only those "within the NHS family" could be contracted to run surgeries and clinics.

Triplet saved

A man has saved his identical triplet's life by donating part of his stomach. Peter Jones, 40, from Southampton, donated 5ft of his intestine to Phillip, who lives near by, at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, in September. It has been disclosed.

Briton held

British diplomats in Nigeria are trying to locate Bruce Henderson, 42, from Chapel of Garioch, Aberdeenshire, who is working in a zone disputed by Nigeria and Cameroon and believed to have been arrested and held since December 22.

Actor, mystery

Two teenage boys and a girl were questioned over the death of Barry Evans, 52, star of the 1967 film *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* and *ITV's Mind Your Language*. He was found at home in Claybrooke Magna, Leicestershire.

Baby death cause

The official cause of death of a baby allegedly battered to death by a British nanny near Boston was "blunt head trauma". Prosecutors had been waiting for the result of the post-mortem examination before deciding on new charges against Louise Woodward.

Court for singer

The former East 17 singer Brian Harvey is to appear before Bow Street magistrates on March 25 charged with assaulting a photographer. Mr Harvey, 22, allegedly assaulted Alan Vargas outside Stringfellow's in London on February 5.

Trial collapses

A Dublin murder trial collapsed yesterday after the appearance in newspapers of photographs of a clash between a photographer and a companion of one of the two men accused of shooting dead a 71-year-old cattle dealer.

Quality arrests

Police arrested 12 men in dawn raids across the Midlands in connection with a series of thefts from the homes of the aristocracy and celebrities. The so-called Quality Street gang is believed to have stolen property worth more than £1 million.

Fossil stolen

The fossilised footprint of a dromaeosaur, a reptile that roamed the Earth before dinosaurs, has been cut with a rock saw from stone on a Crown Land beach near Elgin, Morayshire. Experts plan to remove and preserve the other 30 sets of prints.

Howard says police must seek prior approval to bug

By James Landale and Richard Ford

MICHAEL HOWARD last night announced concessions to his plans to give the police fresh powers to enter and bug private homes and offices.

The Home Secretary said that the police would be forced to seek prior approval from a senior judge, known as a commissioner, before they could enter and bug homes, offices and hotel bedrooms, except in urgent cases. They would also have to seek approval before bugging lawyers, journalists and doctors if there were reasonable grounds that the operation could affect professional privileges.

The compromise, reached by Mr Howard and Jack Straw, his Labour counterpart, will form an amendment to the Police Bill during its committee stage next week. In its original form, the Bill - which has its second reading in the Commons today - would have enabled chief constables to authorise bugging operations while seeking a commissioner's approval retrospectively. Mr Howard had insisted that prior approval would hamper operational effectiveness.

But the Bill suffered defeats in the Lords after peers voiced

concern over the implications for civil liberty of giving police the right to bug without prior approval. Peers passed two amendments, from Labour and the Liberal Democrats, which backed prior approval.

Mr Straw said he was pleased that the Government had now accepted Labour's key demand that prior approval should be given. However, Labour conceded that prior approval would not be needed before the police could bug Arthur Daley-style "lock-ups" and garages, as the party had originally demanded.

Announcing the changes in a written Commons answer, Mr Howard said that the Government had met the peers' concerns. Home Office sources said that they had improved Labour's amendment by tightening up guidelines for how commissioners would give their approval.

A commissioner will approve a bugging operation only "if he is satisfied there are reasonable grounds for believing the action is likely to be of substantial value in the prevention or detection of serious crime and that what the action seeks to achieve could not reasonably be achieved by other means". This effectively

means a commissioner would not be given freedom to second guess an operational decision by the police.

Mr Howard also emphasised that the initial decision to authorise a bugging operation still lay with chief constables, who would remain accountable to the courts. The Liberal Democrats had wanted circuit judges to authorise operations. Alan Beith, the Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman, said that the compromise was full of loopholes.

Sir James Sharpley, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said that the police were reasonably satisfied with the changes. "It was quite clear from the Lords and conversations with Mr Howard and Mr Straw that people wanted to see an element of prior approval in this legislation."

The Home Office also offered reassurances about the sanctity under the Bill of the Catholic confessional, which had concerned the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume. A spokesman said: "The police are happy to give an undertaking not to mount surveillance operations in circumstances covered by the Seal of Confession."



Watson: nominated for *Breaking the Waves*

Oscar triumph

Continued from page 1

Wood blockbusters were trounced by films made with less money but more imagination: *Shine*, the searing true story of a troubled Australian pianist, and *Fargo*, a darkly comic North Dakota thriller, both won seven nominations, while Kenneth Branagh's four-hour, \$10-million Hamlet won four, including one for his adaptation of the play.

Of the Best Picture nominees, only TriStar's *Jerry Maguire* was made by a major studio. The others are *The English Patient*, *Fargo*, *Secrets and Lies* and *Shine*.

Geoffrey Rush, *Shine*'s madly mumbling star, has entered the Oscar race as favourite for Best Actor after winning a Golden Globe last month, despite competition from Woody Harrelson (*The People vs Larry Flynt*) and Billy Bob Thornton (*Sling Blade*).

Diane Keaton and Frances McDormand were the only non-British Best Actress nominees, for their performances in *Marvin's Room* and *Fargo*.

Britain's Marianne Jean-Baptiste, nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her role as a black daughter in search of her white mother in *Secrets and Lies*, finds herself among legends on a shortlist that includes Joan Allen (*The Crucible*), Lauren Bacall (*For her role opposite Barbra Streisand in *The Mirror Has Two Faces**), Juliette Binoche (*The English Patient*) and Barbara Hershey (*The Portrait of a Lady*).

Speaking from Sydney yesterday, Minghella said: "It's

midnight here and it's raining, but I would be happy even if it was a blizzard. With themes like Herodotus, literature and Rudyard Kipling, this film scared a lot of people off. Everybody told me I couldn't adapt the novel and once I couldn't make the film, I certainly feel vindicated."

Wulf Stevenson, director of the British Film Institute, said: "The BFI is delighted at the continued strong showing of British films and in particular *The English Patient*. Minghella's screenwriting and directing talents first came to our attention with a showing of *Cello* at the 1990 London Film Festival. It went on to become the incredibly successful *Truly, Madly, Deeply*."

Mike Leigh, who like Minghella was nominated for his screenplay as well as his directing, called his film's five nominations "amazing" and "wonderful". They will not induce him to start making films in Hollywood, however.

"I love going to Los Angeles and people find my films intriguing there," he said. "But the idea of actually making a film there is a grim one."

In what has become a traditional Oscar footnote, Bristol's Aardman Animation studio has won its sixth consecutive nomination for Best Short Animated Film, this one entitled *Wag the Pig* and directed by Peter Lord, whose previous claims to fame included discovering Nick Park, the creator of the animated characters Wallace and Gromit.

Telegraph sales claim rejected

By Alexandra Frean, Media Correspondent

NEWSPAPER industry auditors last night rejected a complaint by the Telegraph Group against News International, owner of *The Times*, over the way the company accounted for sales of the Monday edition, sold at a reduced price of 10p. The Audit Bureau of Circulations said that it could not agree to the Telegraph's request that the Monday sales be removed from circulation figures.

The Telegraph had complained about a *Times* marketing scheme, designed to ensure that newsgazettes got at least 10p for every copy sold on Mondays. Under the scheme, retailers would receive 8p from the 10p cover price plus a 3p marketing bonus.

Ray Hall, of the ABC, said he had to reject the complaint because *The Times* had ceased the marketing bonus from September 13. The terms of the complaint were, therefore, inaccurate. From September 14, *The Times* increased the payment per copy to retailers from 10p to 11p for the Tuesday to Friday editions. Mr Hall said: "The Telegraph may well come back with an amended

version of their complaint."

Chris Haslam, deputy managing director of the Telegraph Group, said the company was considering its position.

Alasdair MacLeod, circulation and sales director of News International, said: "We have campaigned for transparency, clarity and consistency in all matters to do with the ABC. Sales of *The Times* continue to grow. Unlike the Telegraph, we are not attempting to hide how we are achieving our growth." Last week News International lodged a complaint that the Telegraph broke ABC regulations by including sales made through a cut-price subscription offer in its full-price circulation figures. News International said that the subscription sales should be counted as "sales at a lesser price."

The distinction is important because advertisers base their rates on full price sales. The average daily circulation of *The Times* in January was 766,922, up 11.5 per cent year on year. Sales of *The Daily Telegraph* were up 8.5 per cent at 1,142,094.

Sinn Fein accused of poll rigging

By Nicholas Watt

SINN FEIN was accused last night of planning to cheat in the general election after it emerged that prominent republicans have multiple entries on the electoral register in Belfast. Two convicted terrorists are separately parliamentary constituencies of West Belfast and North Belfast.

Terence Clarke, a bodyguard for Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein leader, and Sean O'Neill, a republican from West Belfast, were among five men registered on a draft roll as living in a two-bedroom flat in a Falls Road tower block. Their names, which were slightly misspelled, have now been removed from the Divis tower block register, but are still registered at a nearby flat and at separate addresses in north Belfast.

The alleged multiple registering was disclosed last night on BBC1 Northern Ireland's *Spotlight* programme. It is not an offence to be registered more than once, but it is an offence to vote more than once. Mr Adams denied that Sinn Fein was involved in electoral fraud.

Dorrell slapped down

Continued from page 1

there forever. Mr Forsyth was doubly upset because Mr Dorrell had not told him about the interview, and he learnt about it only when the storm broke in Scotland. A Tory source said: "Ministers naturally get upset if a colleague drops a catch on their patch."

The delight of the Right at Mr Dorrell's discomfort reflected the underlying jealousies among supporters of the Cabinet ministers who would be candidates in any post-election leadership contest. Mr Dorrell is felt to have made important strides since last summer, but there is resentment on the Right that he has done so by shifting from the Left, appearing to "trim" on such issues as Europe, and speaking out on areas outside his health brief.

One senior MP felt Mr Major had been happy to cut down to size a minister whose leadership ambitions "are worn on his sleeve".

Central Office at first tried to play down Mr Major's putdown by suggesting that Mr Dorrell's constitutional brief had been intended to apply only for until the party conference. But that line did not hold for long when it emerged that he had been put up by party headquarters several times since then to speak on constitutional issues, including an appearance in a television debate on devolution.

Mr Dorrell's friends said that no one had told him that he was not doing the job and that he would continue to do so when asked. And the Health Secretary himself was unabashed. He told ITN that

the Prime Minister expected all of his Cabinet colleagues to campaign on all of the issues. "This (devolution debate) is an argument which will be at the centre of the election campaign and I certainly expect I and all my Cabinet colleagues will be talking about it."

1 The Lord of the Rings J.R.R. Tolkien

2 Nineteen Eighty-Four George Orwell

3 Animal Farm George Orwell

4 Ulysses James Joyce

5 Catch-22 Joseph Heller

6 The Catcher in the Rye J.D. Salinger

7 To Kill a Mockingbird Harper Lee

8 One Hundred Years of Solitude Gabriel Garcia Marquez

9 The Grapes of Wrath John Steinbeck

10 Transporting Irvine Welsh

11 Wild Swans Jung Chang

12 The Great Gatsby F. Scott Fitzgerald

13 Lord of the Flies William Golding

14 On the Road Jack Kerouac

15 Brave New World Aldous Huxley

16 The Wind in the Willows Kenneth Grahame

17 Winnie-the-Pooh A.A. Milne

18 The Color Purple Alice Walker

19 The Hobbit J.R.R. Tolkien

20 The Outsider Albert Camus

21 The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe C.S. Lewis

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Bugging of cell was key to cracking cast-iron alibis

THE police case against David Howells hung by the vital thread of secret tape-recordings of his conversations with his two boys while they were held in police cells.

Howells had a cast-iron alibi that he was miles from the murder scene, playing in a darts match. But tapes of conversations with his sons confirmed detectives' suspicions of his complicity in a cover-up, if not in the murder itself.

Sir John Haworth, QC, Howells' counsel, argued before trial that the tapes should not be admitted on the grounds that bugging broke the European Convention on Human Rights by invading the family's privacy. He

also claimed that the discussion by Howells and his boys of their case carried the same privilege as conversations between a solicitor and his client, protected through professional privilege.

However, the protections against bugging are being eroded. Under the Police Bill now going through Parliament, bugging of certain conversations would be allowed subject to safeguards.

Yesterday the Home Secretary was forced to announce further safeguards to the new bugging provisions after his defeat over the Bill in the Lords. Now police will be required to seek prior approval by a commissioner before bugging

While debate rages on bugging, the body of evidence supporting the admissibility of tapes recorded in police cells is well established. Paul Wilkinson and Frances Gibb report

homes, offices and hotel rooms, except in emergencies. They would also need prior approval before bugging conversations between lawyers and clients, doctors and patients or journalistic operations, wherever these take place.

The Bill, which puts police surveillance on a statutory footing, was produced partly as a result of a case which was heard in the Lords

last summer and is expected to go to the European Court of Human Rights. The law lords had rejected a claim by Sultan Khan that his privacy had been infringed by a bug placed by South Yorkshire Police in the Sheffield home of a suspected drug trafficker. The tape picked up Khan's admission that he too was involved. The Lords upheld rulings of both the trial

judge and the Court of Appeal that the recording was admissible.

At present, "intrusive surveillance" needs authorisation only by a chief constable, on the basis of government guidelines. In certain cases, the chief constable can delegate the right to authorise. But judges, lawyers and many others have argued the need for an outside authority regulator.

However, the body of evidence supporting the admissibility of recordings made in police cells is well established.

To bug and catch Howells, Detective Superintendent Gary Haight had to get permission from his force's Assistant Chief Constable

and Home Office guidelines state that, in such cases, the authorising officer should satisfy himself that four criteria are met: that the investigation involves serious crime; normal investigation methods have been tried and failed or are doomed to fail; there is good reason to believe use of the equipment would be likely to lead to an arrest and conviction (or to prevent acts of terrorism); and use of equipment must be feasible.

The guidelines also stress that the degree of intrusion should match the seriousness of the offence. A visiting room at the cells was wired up before Howells' sons Glenn and John were arrested. The

dozen tapes that resulted from chats between father and sons were strongly incriminating and police had their case.

Technically, police can be sued for civil trespass if "caught in the act", but the act is not regarded as unlawful. Last year, PC John Burlin from South Yorkshire Police was jailed for four years for his part in a car-stealing ring on evidence from bugs in his own patrol car and his station communications room.

As early as 1966 the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction for murder of two Bradford men based on a tape of their conversation in cells in the city's police station.

Alcoholic who was intimidated by an intellectual wife

REPORTS BY PAUL WILKINSON

THE FATHER

DAVID HOWELLS was an alcoholic who admitted that he failed to protect his two children from years of emotional and physical abuse at the hands of their tyrannical mother. A maintenance fitter by trade, he was intellectually inferior to Mrs Howells, a teacher with a university degree. She capitalised on her superiority by controlling the running of the house and finances and utterly dominating her husband and, later, her children.

Howells sought solace at Huddersfield's Primrose Hill Conservative Club, where he was vice-president. He was in the darts team at the club, a pastime which provided him with a "perfect alibi" on the night his sons murdered his wife, but the greatest enjoyment he got at the club was from the beer it sold. As his wife's behaviour deteriorated, Howells began to drink more, sparking even more arguments. "She'd come to the point where she thought I drank too much for my

health," he said. "Nobody has ever suggested I was an alcoholic apart from my wife."

Divorce was discussed, but the couple apparently decided it would be "pointless" because of all the "hassle". More revealingly, John Howells said later that after discussions with his father they had concluded "it wasn't an option. We always knew she would still be there."

Instead, father and sons turned to murder. Howells planned to use his wife's estate of £155,000 to start a new life, offering his sons £5,000, a jet ski each and a cruise if they carried out the killing. The first attempt to kill Mrs Howells, by pushing her from the balcony of their hotel during a holiday in Ibiza in 1995, had to be abandoned when they were given rooms on the first floor. But later that summer they agreed to murder her in their own home. They set up an alibi for their

father because they realised he would be the prime suspect. Their first attempt was abandoned when the boys' nerve cracked, but a week later the plan went smoothly. Glenn, then aged 15, crept into the house and battered his mother to death with a hammer. John, then 14, disposed of the murder weapon and his brother's bloody clothing.

The boys later told police that they had gone out to exercise their dog. Glenn had returned home first to discover a teapot and cafetiere which had held £100 lying on the kitchen floor. He found his mother's body slumped against the sofa on a beanbag. She had been bludgeoned to death by at least ten blows. When John returned he stayed outside. But blood spots were found on the carpet under an overturned desk, indicating that it had been toppled after the killing. Blood was also found on Glenn's socks, but the only place on the carpet where it had been trodden on was the position where the



Evelyn Howells with her lover Russell Hirst, right, and husband David. He felt inferior to her and took refuge at the Conservative Club

killer would have stood. Examination of a jacket worn by John revealed spots from flying blood on both sleeves, which he claimed had come when his mother cut herself preparing food some days earlier.

The next day, when all three went to identify Mrs Howells'

body, Glenn showed little emotion until the others cried. Even then, he soon regained his composure. A policeman noticed Glenn wink twice at his brother and smirk.

However, police were unable to shake the boys' story. To break it, they decided to arrest them and covertly tape

their conversations. Graham Dearden, Mr Howells' solicitor, said: "Anxious consideration will be given to the prospect of an appeal. The primary grounds will probably be the decision of the judge to admit the covert tapes. David was devastated by the verdict, but he has the hope

that the Court of Appeal will allow an appeal. The verdict today came as a complete shock."

Russell Hirst, David Howells' closest friend, who had a secret 12-year affair with Mrs Howells, said: "I am glad it is all over and that justice has been done for Eve." He is the

beneficiary of Mrs Howells' estate because of the conviction of her family, but yesterday he said: "At the moment I want to donate the money to charity. I don't know which one, but Eve's money is not something I want on my hands. I have no feelings for the boys or David."

Childhood torments of boys who turned killer

THE SONS

THE brothers John and Glenn Howells were thought to be responsible for a string of petty crimes in their neighbourhood (Paul Wilkinson writes). They were known locally as the Kray Twins but the nickname was inappropriate. The real Kray twins at least loved their mother. The Howells boys hated theirs.

Since their youngest days, she had tormented them emotionally and physically, rarely letting them play out, and was known to drag them in by the hair if they did not come immediately when they were called.

She shrieked, swore and spat at them as toddlers and regularly smacked them on the back, bottom and legs, targeting the oldest, Glenn, more than her "favourite", John. Margaret Drake, their next-door neighbour at the time, said that she would always regret not calling in social services. She recalled how Mrs Howells said she had tied them to the kitchen table when they were two or three and added: "We used to dread them going in for bathtime because of the

screams. It wasn't just the normal cry of a child misbehaving - it was screams as though she were drowning them."

Their mother had never got over the death of her first child, Gareth, who died aged three days in 1978. Glenn, born two years later, often complained that she preferred her dead son to him.

When John was about four and Glenn six, their mother would frequently take their favourite cuddly toys and hold a lighter to them, threatening to burn them as she listened to her children crying and pleading with her not to. At the age of five, John was referred to a child psychologist after stealing apples from other children's lunchboxes at school.

He changed schools and eventually settled down but his behaviour was still extremely erratic. It included opening cans and eating a few mouthfuls before leaving them in buckets by the door, biting around the edge of the

bed, and diving for the freezer when it was opened and eating the contents as quickly as possible.

His 6-stone mother kept a lock on the freezer, wrote a diary of what she was going to eat weeks in advance, and grounded the children for two weeks if even an apple core was found in their bedroom.

On one occasion John was violently ill after Mrs Howells made him eat a portion of sprouts that he had left from his dinner a week before. In the view of a criminal psychologist, brought in by police to help to find the killer, she was a "control freak".

John was an affectionate child, unlike his brother, who preferred the company of men. Mary Dyson, Mrs Howells' stepmother, said: "She seemed to have it in for Glenn for some reason. She seemed to despise him."

He was allowed to shower only twice a week and became his mother's "body slave", according to one psychologist. He was forced to massage her back as she stood naked and dig dirt from her toenails.



John Howells, left, and Glenn: spat at, tied up, and dragged by the hair

Disciplinarian who created atmosphere of fear in class

THE MOTHER

IN the school where she taught, she was known to pupils as "Evil Howells".

Some colleagues at Huddersfield's Newsome High School tactfully described Eve Howells as a "strict disciplinarian". Others were more forthright in their condemnation of the history and religious affairs teacher who prompted a stream of complaints from parents and pupils.

Maureen Smith, a teacher, who described Mrs Howells as very disturbed, said: "She maintained an atmosphere of fear in a classroom such as I have never experienced in 26

years." Mrs Howells read history at York University before taking her teaching diploma at Leeds University. She started work at Newsome High School in 1987 as a supply teacher before being given a fulltime post in 1990.

John Chadwick, head of humanities, said: "She was a firm teacher who, on occasions, chastised pupils for not producing work." He said she was often sharp and abrupt with pupils and tended to deal with them head-on rather than use indirect

methods that could have been more successful.

"She had a formal style and high expectations of her pupils," Mr Chadwick said. "She expected work to be done and, if it was not, she would challenge them about it. She had very little tact."

"She did not understand the effect she could have on the children. They were often upset at the way she spoke to them."

Some of her colleagues suspected that she drank heavily and a school trip was once disrupted when she was found, apparently unconscious, in a hedgehog.

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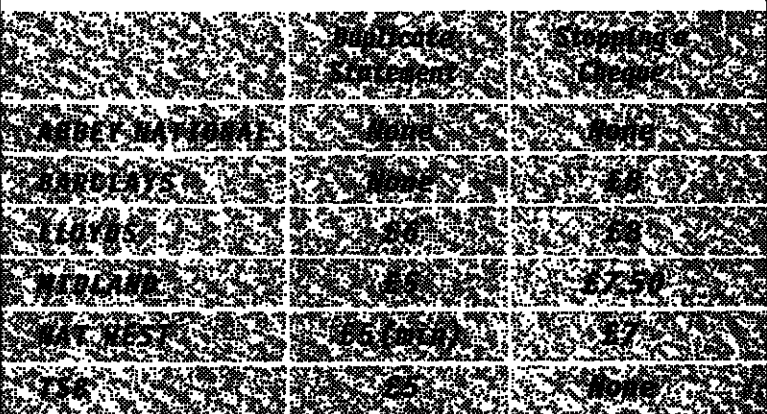
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Dementia therapy might produce star students

Scientists close to devising pills to boost memory

By JEREMY LAURANCE
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

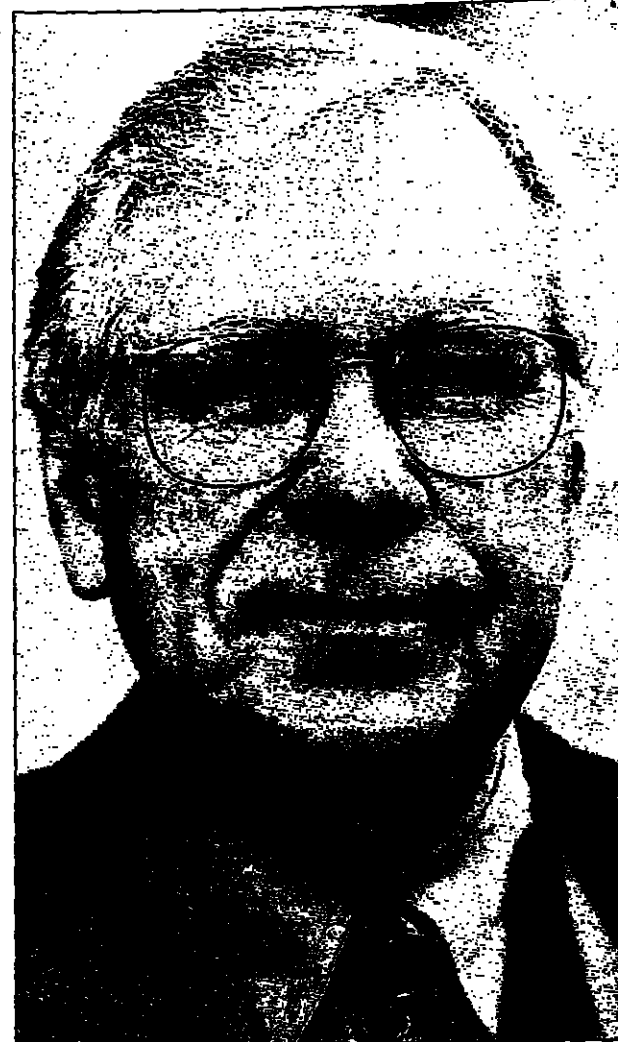
A NEW generation of drugs capable of turning ordinary students into double-first graduates could be available within five years, scientists said yesterday.

More than 200 chemical compounds that will boost memory and learning ability are being developed by pharmaceutical companies in a race to find an effective treatment for Alzheimer's disease and other kinds of dementia. Some scientists believe that these "memory pills" will also lift normal mental performance to "super-normal" levels. Animals given the drugs have shown remarkable improvements in learning.

James McGaugh, director of the Centre for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory at the University of California, said: "On the basis of animal experiments I believe drugs will be developed that will have not just modest but also strong memory-enhancing capabilities in human beings. Some of my colleagues disagree about the likely magnitude of the change, but if it happens in laboratory animals why shouldn't it happen in humans?"

There is only one cognitive enhancer, Tacrine, licensed for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, but its effects are modest — slowing mental deterioration by about six months — and its side-effects, such as liver damage, severe. Other drugs with fewer side-effects are becoming available, and the early trials of a new class of cognitive enhancers, called ampaikines, that have a different mechanism of action, are said to have produced remarkable effects in humans.

Professor McGaugh, who was speaking to the press after an international conference on the use of drugs to enhance cognitive function, said that



James McGaugh, who believes "smart drugs" will have strong memory-enhancing capabilities

although the new drugs were intended to help those with memory disorders they were likely to have wide appeal in a competitive commercial world among students sitting exams and ambitious workers wishing to give themselves an edge over rivals.

However, he said that the implications of giving the drugs to youngsters should be considered before they became a reality, he said, as they

would need to be taken regularly, possibly for life. "My view is that if such drugs became available they would be widely used. We believe this research has reached the point where we should consider the implications because these drugs do exist, they are being developed and they will be available a few years down the road."

The time to take a memory pill will be while learning or

revising, not outside the examination room. The drugs work by improving memory processing at the time the information is acquired, enhancing the transition from short to long-term memory; not by improving recall.

In animal experiments, rats taught to avoid one part of a maze by being given mild electric shocks remembered the information up to a month later if they were given the drug, compared with others that had forgotten within 24 hours.

Steven Rose of the department of biology at the Open University, who chaired the London conference organised by the CIBA Foundation, said there were about 140 so-called smart drugs sold by mail order and in bars in California but none was effective and some were hazardous. "Basic research is now beginning to uncover potentially more adequate treatments. There seems little doubt that within five years a variety of potential cognitive enhancers will be embarking on clinical trials," he said.

Professor Rose added that there were about 800,000 people with memory loss in Britain and the number was expected to double in 20 years. If the onset of dementia could be postponed by five years it would halve the number affected.

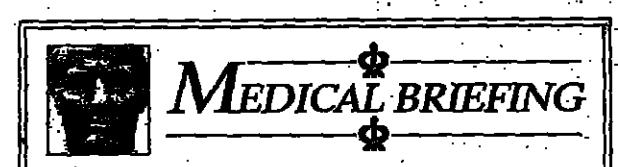
However, Anthea Tinker of the Age Concern Institute of Gerontology at King's College London, said it was too early to judge what the effects — and side-effects — of the drugs might be and warned that public expectations were being raised without firm grounds. "The research is in its very early stages," she said. "It has either been done on rats, not human beings, or on small samples, on men [not women] and on people in institutions. We need much wider research. The long-term effects of these drugs are not known."

When forgetfulness need not herald the onset of Alzheimer's

THERE is a tie worn by old soldiers which is patterned by pictures of elephants with knots tied in their trunks. The organisation CRAFT — which stands for Can't Remember A Flipping Thing, or words to that effect — was the tie for whose memory is beginning to fail; in return a recipient makes a donation to Army welfare funds.

Will the advent of arocept, later to be joined on the chemists' shelves by metrifonate, which are safer alternative drugs to tacrine, make CRAFT's tie a period piece, as benign memory loss becomes as uncommon as diphtheria? Benign memory loss is as much part of growing older as greying hair, baldness, sagging skin and a pot belly. Everybody who lives long enough will suffer from it. Unfortunately, forgetfulness is also an early symptom of Alzheimer's disease, and other forms of dementia.

The essential features of all forms of dementia, which distinguishes them from the usual inability of the over-60s to find their keys and spectacles or to remember the names of their colleagues, is that there is a general intellectual decline, lack of judgment, and loss of sense of time and place (so that patients easily become lost). In dementia



Dr Thomas Stuttaford

there is a general disintegration and change in someone's personality. In old age character traits initially become exaggerated, so that the kind become absurdly generous and the irritable cantankerous. Later in the disease these changes extend beyond reasonable behaviour. Patients with obvious degrees of dementia may also sometimes appear emotionally flat and show a lack of response to sad or happy events.

Drugs like arocept and metrifonate help memory in an appreciable number of cases but do not seem to benefit other symptoms of mental deterioration. However, as memory is essential to learning, a loss of memory can be a grave disadvantage. Memory loss is divided into immediate (forgetfulness about what has just happened), intermediate (when it covers the past few days) and long term (which includes childhood memories, the last to go). In some cases of

memory loss patients revert to the language, or accents, of their youth.

Memory loss when it is a result of psychological rather than physical troubles is not always complete and may cover only certain aspects of life, usually those which are most disturbing. Having a couple of drinks improves memory, even in the old, but the mechanism for this or by which this is achieved is complex. More than two drinks and memory starts to decline rapidly. A heavy binge and the memory of anything which happened while drinking may be lost.

When memory loss is caused by long-term over-indulgence of alcohol coupled with malnutrition, patients often resort to confabulation, which is the medical term for making up what which cannot be remembered. There is also a psychological condition in which people unconsciously rewrite history so that they become genuinely convinced

that their account of events, which is usually more flattering than the reality, is true.

This phenomenon accounts for the spectacle of an otherwise perfectly honest, respectable person lying like a trooper in their autobiography, or even in court. About two years ago a patient consulted me about a sudden loss of memory which lasted for about 12 hours and extended back to the time before he had married. The man looked around at his family, gathered around the dinner table, had no idea who they were, but luckily thought they were both amusing and charming.

The patient could not remember what he did or where he was but had total recall of his undergraduate days and university learning. Next morning his memory returned; he had suffered from transient global amnesia, a form of transient ischaemic attack in which a clot has lodged for a time in one of the blood vessels in that part of the brain which is concerned with memory.

Drugs of the benzodiazepine group also cause intermediate retrograde memory loss, useful when they are taken when undergoing a minor surgical procedure, but a nuisance if a long-lasting sleeping pill, such as Mogadon, has been used.

Health alert over TV ad's runny eggs

By JOANNA BALE

A TV ADVERT for eggs is to be studied by Whitehall advisers because it shows runny yolks without a health warning. The Department of Health said that vulnerable groups such as the elderly and pregnant women should eat only solid whites and yolks because of a salmonella risk.

"We will look at the advertisement as a matter of urgency," a spokesman said. "It's really up to the Independent Television Commission to make sure advertisements, when necessary, carry health and safety advice."

The £1 million campaign by the British Egg Industry Council, the first for 15 years, shows fingers of toast being dipped into a liquid yolk. Andrew Foret, of the council, said: "If you buy from a reputable retailer, store properly in a fridge and eat before the best-before date, we don't see any risk."

Research confirms BSE can be passed to calves

By MICHAEL HORNSBY, AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

COWS can pass "mad cow" disease to their calves although the risk is slightly lower than was at first thought, a scientist conducting research for the Government said yesterday.

The disclosure confirms interim findings last August which the Ministry of Agriculture said had given a false picture because it had been forced to release them before they had been fully analysed. Confirmation of maternal transmission is certain to stiffen resistance of some European Union states to easing the ban on British beef and could oblige the Government to slaughter more cattle.

Richard Peters, Agricultural Attaché at the German embassy, said: "This will harden attitudes in my country. In recent weeks officials here have been telling me that they did not think transmission was occurring after all."

Germany is slaughtering 2,600 cattle imported from Britain and considering whether a further 12,000 born to them should be culled. If the full call goes ahead, Germany will certainly press Britain to take similar action.

The results of the analysis, based on a seven-year experiment, were unveiled yesterday by Professor Roy Anderson, director of the Wellcome Trust research centre for the study of the epidemiology of infectious diseases at Oxford University.

Results show that about 8 per cent of calves born to mothers in the later stages of incubating BSE will inherit the disease, compared with the estimate of 10 per cent disclosed last August. The analysis is based on research begun in 1989 by the Central Veterinary Laboratory.

Professor Anderson said: "Further analysis suggests that true maternal transmission

occurred in between 7 and 8 per cent of calves born to infected mothers. The remaining 2 to 3 per cent of cases were most likely caused by an inherited genetic susceptibility to contaminated feed."

He said that in real life probably no more than 1 per cent of calves from infected mothers would develop BSE. That was because nearly all the calves that got BSE in the experiment were born in the last six months before symptoms appeared in their mothers. Cows did not seem to transmit the disease at earlier stages of incubation, which averaged five years.

Professor Anderson said the rate of maternal transmission was too low to change existing forecasts that BSE would virtually die out by 2000 or 2001. He doubted whether culling the offspring of infected mothers would speed eradication of the disease.

Request of black links to

Robbers for with couple Rolex watch

Sproat plan spice up are

BY MICHAEL HORSNELL

Mr Lawrence, a sixth-form student aged 18, was stabbed near a bus stop at Eltham, southeast London. His mother Doreen Lawrence, 44, who with her husband launched a

The second day of the in-

Neil Accourt claimed privilege in declining to say if he had been present at the scene of the murder, though Mr Mansfield said that he could

Luke Knight with Gary Dobson behind him, left; and Neil Acourt followed by his brother Jamie at Southwark Coroner's Court yesterday

not be placed in jeopardy if he did respond, having already been acquitted. Mr. Account also refused to say if he could assist on how Mr. Lawrence came by his injuries. "I claim privilege, full stop," he told Mr. Mansfield.

He claimed privilege when asked if he lived near the scene of the murder, and again when asked: "Are you concerned about the death of a black person in the vicinity?"

Mr. Conway said: "What is happening here is that Mr.

Mansfield is asking a series of questions of an emotive nature, trying to get him to waive his privilege."

Mr. Account was asked "Have you ever spoken to anyone else about what you would do to black people?", but the coroner refused to allow it.

Mr Conway agreed that it was a matter of record that Mr Account had refused to answer police questions at two interviews in May 1993. A similar set of questions was put to Mr

Knight, who also claimed privilege, except to say that he was not at the scene of the murder.

Mr Norris was described by Mr Mansfield as a "automaton" when he refused to answer even uncontroversial questions, such as whether he played football. After another exchange between the lawyers, Neil Acount was recalled to the witness box, where he told the inquest: "I am not prepared to answer any questions involving the case. I have

been found innocent in a court of law.* His brother Jamie similarly refused to answer questions, but Barry Dobson was allowed to answer some questions by his counsel, Michael Holmes.

Mr Dobson agreed with Mr Mansfield that it was important to assist any investigation into the truth about the circumstances of the murder. He was shown a grey woollen jacket with yellow lining which he said he recognised, but he refused to say whether

The inquest was earlier told by Dr Richard Shepherd, head of forensic pathology at St George's Hospital in Tooting, south London, that Mr Lawrence had received two five-inch deep wounds through the chest and arm from a single-bladed knife that severed a large vein, two arteries and the major nerves to his right arm. He bled to death.

The inquest continues.

BY ADRIAN LEE

He centrally locked the doors but one of the robbers threw a stone through a window, showering the occupants with glass. "He started fighting with us. He started

Alowade claimed he was forced to take part in the robbery by drug dealers who had kidnapped his son and were holding him to ransom over an unpaid debt of £2,500 for cocaine. The trial continues.

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

Mr Sproat said that popular culture currently regarded as worthless in its own time may well turn out to have great historical signifi-

The British Video Association has already decided to donate to the British Film Institute copies of all videos released in Britain by its members.

A spokesman for the British Phonographic Institute said that the record industry was content with existing arrangements, although it welcomed the chance to discuss the subject.

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Leading cleric says royal divorce 'is bound to have important consequences'

Church urged to allow remarriage in adultery cases

By RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

A LEADING clergyman yesterday called for the Church of England to permit second marriages in cases of adultery or desertion.

The Very Rev David Edwards, Provost Emeritus of Southwark Cathedral, and one of the Church's most influential retired clergymen, says that while divorce "is undeniably one of the most devastating of the evils in our society", the Church should look again at working out a process whereby some second marriages can be authorised, as is already possible in the Anglican Church in Scotland and Ireland.

Dr Edwards's proposals are published in the foreword to the 1997 Church of England Year Book, published during the first National Marriage Week and as the Church faces a future with a divorced King as its Supreme Governor.

He writes: "After great contentment with the Queen's time on the throne, the divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales is bound to have important consequences, particularly after the admission of adultery (rather than penitence for it) included by both in generally lamentable television programmes."

The choice of Dr Edwards, a leading liberal of the same era as Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, is significant given the agenda-setting nature of the foreword. Its contents, ostensibly a review of the past year, will be noted carefully by all members of the General Synod, including its bishops, many of whom are known to feel that change to the Church's traditional stance on marriage is overdue.

The growing pressure to permit second marriages after divorce is interpreted by some as an indication that the Church is preparing to accept a possible remarriage of the Prince of Wales. Church leaders have so far remained

silent on the consequences of the royal divorce, which Dr Edwards says is "understandable".

At the moment, remarriage in church is forbidden where a former spouse is still living. But because secular law sanctions remarriage, some clergy ignore the church's official line and marry divorcees anyway.

Practice varies from diocese to diocese, with most clergy offering the "blessing" service for divorcees, which does not contain the lifelong vows of fidelity, and which usually takes place after a secular

... the heathen partner wishes for a separation, let him have it. In such cases, the Christian husband or wife is under no compulsion" (1 Corinthians vii, 12-16). "Presumably the possibility of a new marriage is implied," he adds in the foreword.

The Church has recently permitted the ordination of divorced clergy in some circumstances and many now feel it must move towards allowing second marriages, as more than one third of first marriages now end in divorce. Of about 263,000 marriages in England each year, 91,000 are conducted in Anglican churches.

However, these figures also include some second marriages, and no central figures exist for blessings.

Dr Edwards, who was appointed OBE in 1995, says it is not realistic to pretend that the position of the monarch in Church or State is the same as it was four centuries ago.

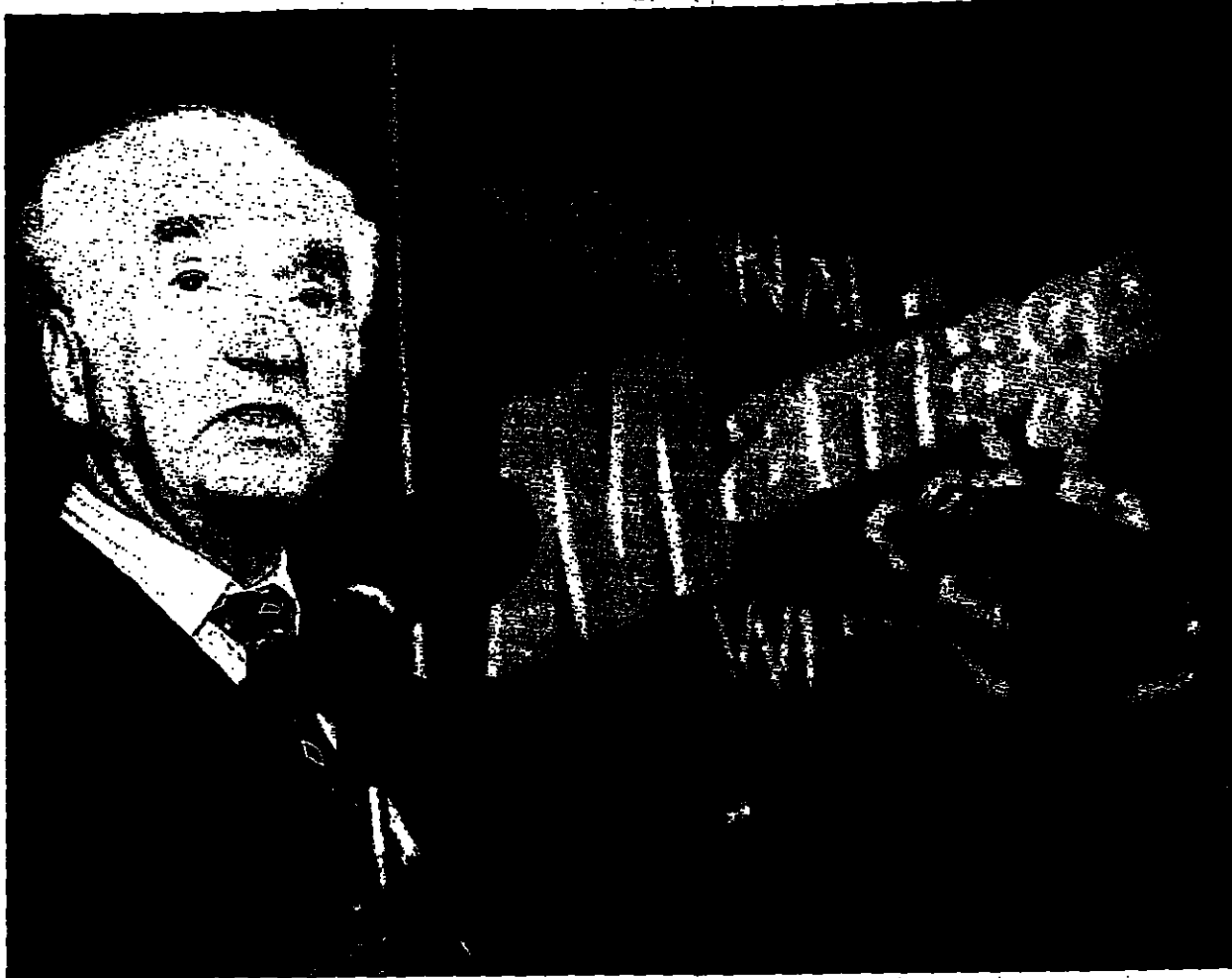
Any divorce is a tragedy, he says, and adds: "But there needs to be no harm in stating the obvious truth that the publicity (both sought and intruded) about unhappy relationships has destroyed much of the glamour which previously surrounded the House of Windsor."

He says that the current trend for blessings to take place after civil weddings was "ambiguous" and that instead there should be a process comparable to that of the Roman Catholic Church, which allows for decrees of nullity to be granted, but which denies communion to divorcees who remarry without an annulment.

Dr Edwards also challenges the Church's relationship with the State, suggesting that church leaders should begin talks "with a view to making some new arrangements which would preferably not constitute a clean break with the past."



Edwards: remarriage acceptable in some cases



Lord Mackay reiterated his commitment to the ideal of marriage as a union for life between a man and woman

Mackay comes to the defence of mothers who stay at home

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Lord Chancellor has called for the Government to take a lead in promoting a "positive and realistic" image of marriage, coming out in strong defence of mothers who stay at home. Lord Mackay of Clashfern said yesterday that it was important to get over the message that parenting and home-building were worthwhile activities.

"No woman should be made to feel apologetic about describing herself as a housewife," he said. "Caring for children is extremely hard work and this needs to be understood and respected, not ignored." Nor should fathers be ashamed to spend more time with their children, he said, adding that "no one's last words are ever: I wish I'd spent more time at the office".

Lord Mackay, the minister responsible for marriage support, was addressing an event in London to mark National Marriage Week. He called for efforts to reverse projections that marriage would decline from 57 per cent of the adult population in 1992 to 49 per cent by 2020. "The first thing we can do is promote a positive image of marriage among the public, especially among young people."

Last year the Lord Chancellor found himself consistently the target of a group of rightwingers who claimed his divorce reforms, including the scrapping of "quickie" divorces and increasing mediation in marriage break-up, would undermine the institution of marriage.

Yesterday he reiterated his personal commitment to the

Christian ideal of marriage as a union for life between a man and woman. But it was an ideal just as relevant to those of other faiths and to a secular society, he said.

In spite of the fall in numbers of couples marrying, Lord Mackay said he rejected the view that marriage was outdated. Its advantage over cohabitation was that it combined a "private relationship between two people with a public commitment".

First, the Government could promote a positive and realistic image of marriage among young people and the public generally. It had begun this with the Family Law Act 1996, which reforms the divorce laws and provides a procedure expressly aimed at saving "saveable marriages". Secondly, the Government

could show a greater awareness of the impact of all policies on marriage and family life and encourage opinion-formers to promote marriage positively. "I believe that lifelong commitment to one person is still the ideal to which the majority of young people aspire. I also believe that it is by far and away the best environment for the birth and care of children. Thirdly, the Government could back a full range of marriage-support services."

Lord Mackay said 40 bids had been received for funding that he was offering to organisations providing marriage support projects. But there was a long way to go before there was a full network of services in place. Marriage preparation, in particular, was relatively undeveloped.

Man jailed for leaving children in filthy house

A father has been jailed for leaving his three children alone in an uninhabitable house for three months while he set up home in a pub with his girlfriend. His 14-year-old daughter was left to care for her brother, 12, and sister, 6. She often went without food to make sure there was enough for them to eat, and her sister slept among bin bags.

The man, from near Newport, South Wales, who cannot be named, admitted three counts of cruelty to children and was jailed for two years by Newport Crown Court. The children's mother had left the family in 1994.

Scargill victory

Anne Scargill, whose husband, Arthur, is the NUM president, was given her job back just before an industrial tribunal was due to start. Mrs Scargill, 53, from Worsbrough, Barnsley, had been made redundant by Barnsley Co-operative Society, which then advertised for staff.

School TB fears

Up to 400 pupils at a leading independent school are to be tested for tuberculosis after a 15-year-old boarder was struck down with the disease. He is expected to make a full recovery. Boris Yeltsin's grandson, also 15 and a boarder at Millfield School, Somerset, may be among those tested.

Guns charges

Richard Law, 45, the national secretary of the Shooters' Rights Association who is leading the national campaign against new gun laws, has been charged with unlawful possession of explosives and unlawful possession and distribution of prohibited weapons.

Last laugh

A man who found a stolen joke book belonging to the comedian Bob Monkhouse was cleared of dishonesty at Marlborough Street Magistrate's Court, London. The CPS decided to drop a charge of handling stolen goods against Stanley Allen Swaine, 47, a management consultant.

Star saves pub

Nick Banks, drummer with the band Pulp, has bought his local pub, the Washington, to prevent it becoming an Irish theme pub, as happened to two near by in Sheffield. His friend Mick Deeley, the landlord, said: "We didn't want our favourite pub to become Paddy McGinty's Goat."

Mystery beast

Farmers have been warned to look out for "a large Puma-like animal" after nine sheep were found mauled to death on a farm at Snainton, near Scarborough. The carcasses were covered in claw marks with their stomachs ripped open at South Moor Farm on the edge of the North York Moors.

Claim settled

A former police firearms instructor whose hearing was impaired has settled for undisclosed damages out of court. John Wilson, 57, from Stirling, was suing William Wilson, Chief Constable of Central Scotland Police, for £175,000, claiming he was given inadequate earplugs.

Player charged

The snooker player Silvio Francisco was remanded in custody by Dover Magistrates accused of smuggling cannabis worth £155,000, allegedly found in a car at the port. Mr Francisco, 50, once ranked among the world's top ten players, is due to appear in court again tomorrow.

Foxtrot bravo

A former wartime pilot is taking a PhD in ballroom dancing. Harry West, 75, of Bristol, will write a study of expression and aesthetics in the foxtrot, waltz, quickstep, Viennese waltz and tango at the Laban Centre of Movement and Dance in London, ratified by City University.

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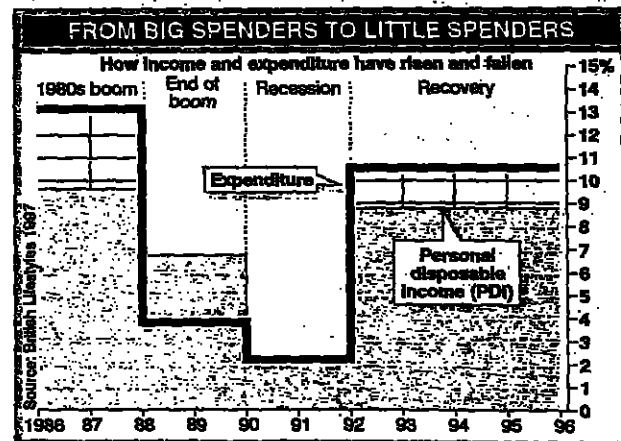
By EMMA WILKINS AND GLEN OWEN

SHOPPING for a little treat after a hard day's work has created a new consumer spending boom, according to a survey. Shoppers believe they are being prudent by buying small indulgences such as CDs, glossy magazines and perfumes rather than ostentatious luxury goods, but the overall effect has meant that spending is now rising faster than incomes.

The small-scale revival of the 1980s spending boom was revealed by Mintel International, the market analysis company. Consumers in the late 1980s were more likely to spend on conspicuous items such as jewellery or a new briefcase, or borrow heavily for home improvements and furniture. Today, low wage rises and worries about job security mean that consumers still shrink from the behaviour of the 80s "feel-good" years.

Peter Ayton, Mintel's chief statistician, said: "Because we are not spending a large amount on one big item, we think we are being prudent. We are indulging on small things to reward ourselves after a hard day at the office, but they add up. We are actually spending more than our incomes but we don't realise it."

The British Lifestyles 1997



report shows that spending over the past five years has risen by 33 per cent on cinema tickets, by 37 per cent on male toiletries and by 32 per cent on fast foods. Consumer spending rose overall by 10.5 per cent, while personal disposable income rose 8.8 per cent.

Much of the "indulgence-spending" is due to an increase in the number of people aged 35-54 who are single or have delayed starting a family, from 7.18 million in 1992 to 8.7 million in 1996.

Incomes had previously been rising ahead of spending. Over the past ten years, incomes have risen by 30.2 per cent, compared with a 27 per cent increase in consumer expenditure. The greatest increase in household spending

over ten years was in childcare, with £4.3 billion spent on domestic help, compared with £1.09 billion in 1986.

Spending on education, including university fees and private schools is forecast to rise by 59 per cent in real terms between 1996 and 2001, the survey predicts. It has already risen from £1.79 billion in 1986 to an estimated £7.03 billion for 1996 - largely due to a boom in university places and the need for parents to pay more towards upkeep.

Women continue to bear responsibility for buying food. The survey, which questioned groups of 1,000 people, found that 88 per cent of men do not usually shop for groceries.

Church organ fans offended by wit who pulled out all the stops

By ALAN HAMILTON

A MUSIC publisher thought he was playing *con brio* when he composed an advertisement for his extensive collection of church organ music with liberal use of puns and double entendres referring to the instrument. But the reaction of readers of the *Church Music Quarterly* was positively furious.

The innuendo is now diminishing. A reader in Surrey complained to the Advertising Standards Authority, which ruled yesterday that the catalogue of vulgar-

ity was "likely to cause serious or widespread offence" and warned the advertiser not to do it again.

Barry Brunton, the offending advertiser who owns the Cambridgeshire music publisher Occumuse, was unable to resist such dubious puns as *Too Hot To Handel*, and doubtful references to the respected 19th-century church music composer John Bachus Dykes.

Mr Brunton was unrepentant yesterday. "*Church Music Quarterly* is a boring magazine; we wanted to liven it up a bit and draw attention

to ourselves," he said. "So we thought we would do an advertisement full of double entendres and see if it could get in the magazine." *Church Music Quarterly* said it checked advertisements "generally", but not for indecency or innuendo.

But Mr Brunton remains puzzled that, while he cannot have his advertisement in a magazine read by members of church choirs all over the world, Channel 4 has been allowed to screen a series on the subject of church music under the title *Howard Goodall's Organ Works*.

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One-year AS level will offer flexibility without cutting standards, says Shephard

Exam revamp to give sixth-formers wider study choice

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

PLANS to toughen up some A-level syllabuses and provide a wider range of courses in sixth forms were announced yesterday by Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary.

More rigorous A-level courses are to start next year, at the same time as a revamped AS level to be taken in one year, rather than the present two. The changes are intended to encourage greater breadth of study, increase flexibility and reduce the failure rate at A level without compromising standards.

Mrs Shephard has accepted most of the recommendations from a review of qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds by Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority. She said the reforms would enhance quality and consistency on academic and vocational courses.

Students on both types of course will also be examined on the "key skills" of communication, numeracy and use of information technology. Only those passing the course will be eligible for a new Advanced Diploma embracing A levels and vocational qualifications.

Under the Government's blueprint, most teenagers taking the academic route will embark on three AS levels on entry to the sixth form or college. After taking examinations at the end of the first year, they will then have the



Shephard: hopes reforms will cut A-level failure

option of converting the course into a full A level with a second year of study, or "cashing" their grades and claiming an AS-level qualification.

The AS level will continue to be worth half an A level on the university entrance scale. John Dunford, past president of the Secondary Heads Association, said he expected AS levels to be used increasingly for university offers.

The vocational alternative for sixth-formers will continue to be the Advanced GNVQ, which is worth two A levels and already includes assessment on key skills. The new framework is intended to encourage students to mix GNVQs and A levels where appropriate.

Under Mrs Shephard's A-

level changes grammar will account for 25 per cent of the marks in modern language papers and will be given greater emphasis in English. New "subject cores" would mean a calculator-free paper in maths exams and more stress on pre-1900 literature in English. History syllabuses would require a "substantial" element of British history and some pre-1900 study.

"People have asked why we are changing the A level if there is nothing wrong with it," Mrs Shephard said. But while studies had "positive messages", she said, they had also identified areas which needed to be strengthened so that the quality of the qualification was not compromised.

The measures will place new restrictions on modular A levels, which are increasingly popular. Students will be allowed only one retake of any module, tested during the course and none for the last module, which is worth 30 per cent of total marks.

Despite widespread fears over the quality of modular A levels, Ofsted reported yesterday that standards were comparable to A levels examined in one go at the end of the course.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, said that the AS level would make students work harder in their lower-sixth year.



Learning curve: children in a reception class at Wandale primary school in Wandsworth, southwest London

New boys and girls face testing time

BY THE time today's infants leave school they will be no strangers to exams. The class of 2011 will have run a formidable gamut of tests.

At four and five, pupils starting school in 1998 will take the inaugural national "baseline" tests during their first half-term. The assessments, in English, mathematics and personal/social development, will last 20 minutes at most and the results will be sent to parents. Methods of testing will vary, with some schools choosing a tick-list of abilities and others writing a brief assessment.

At seven, pupils will take three hours of national curriculum tests in English and mathe-

matics during the spring or summer term and will also be assessed by their teacher in science. Parents will be told their child's grade in relation to the national average. The Government aims to publish schools' averages soon.

At 11, children will sit their second wave of national curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, lasting five hours in all. They will again be graded against the national average. Tables of every school's average results are to be published for the first time next month.

At 14, the final round of national curriculum tests in the three core subjects, which take seven hours. There are

plans to publish school averages nationally.

At 15, pupils will take their first public exams. The new short-course GCSE, worth half a full GCSE, was available last September. More new subjects will be offered but the most popular are likely to be religious studies and history or geography, taken over one or two years.

At 16, pupils will sit GCSEs and from next September will be able to take part one General National Vocational Qualifications. These two-year vocational courses in subjects such as engineering, business and manufacturing, are worth two GCSEs. GCSE results tables for schools have been

published since 1992.

At 17, pupils will be able to sit the new Advanced Supplementary Level examinations. Designed to mirror the first year of A level, they can be taken as half an A level for university entry or carried on for another year to become a full A level.

At 18, students will take A levels and Advanced GNVQs, the vocational alternative currently worth two A levels. There are plans for an Advanced GNVQ taking half the time and worth the same as an A level. Bright pupils can also take Special Papers, known as S levels, in 20 subjects.

Leading article, page 19

Shopping for 'soft option' courses prompts call for fewer boards

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

GILLIAN SHEPHARD called yesterday for a cut in the number of examination boards to prevent schools shopping around for "soft option" courses. She said the Government favoured three main boards, to cover all academic and vocational examinations, replacing the four academic and three job-related boards. Mrs Shephard out-

lined her views as Ofsted school inspectors yesterday criticised the A-level boards for "patchy" attempts to ensure they all offered the same standard.

The examination boards said they were already moving towards merger. The Academic Union of London board has formed Edexcel with Btes, one of the vocational groups, and the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB) was working closely with

City and Guilds on joint projects. The moves are intended to meet concerns that the rising A-level pass rate means exams are less demanding and that the proliferation of awarding bodies means schools can pick easier papers.

Heather James, assistant chief executive of the NEAB, said that further endorsed mergers would be a step too far. She said there were once 20 boards for the former CSE examination, which had dwindled

to a handful today. "We have already announced an agreement with City and Guilds, so we have an arrangement for a unitary body," she said. "Mrs Shephard is thinking of reducing four academic boards by one at a time when syllabuses are being radically reduced. This is a great deal of disruption when our energies need to be devoted to working with schools and colleges developing a new A level."

Labour said it would consider a

unified system. The Government's consultation said there were tight controls, but evidence that "examination standards have not been consistently applied and maintained across boards".

Ofsted's study said boards were thorough in maintaining their own standards, but rarely compared them to other boards. The "great majority" of marking was accurate and the reputation of A levels was being maintained, the study con-

cluded. However, the boards did not have a formal process of checking if the standard of their own papers was drifting over longer periods.

The report said that the wide range of syllabuses allowed schools to shop around between boards. "Some options allowed candidates to achieve the same marks by demonstrating quite different types of skills and understanding. This represented an unsatisfactory level of variability within the syllabuses."

Professor Nicholas Postgate, a Cambridge specialist in ancient Mesopotamia, said: "The critical point is to collect information about the trade. We as archaeologists and people in a supposedly civilised country shouldn't be encouraging the trade in these antiquities, which are very often illegally exported and excavated. Because the trade is illicit, no documentation is kept of where it came from. It's very difficult to get a court of law to accept that."

Home ownership slows as tenants move with the times

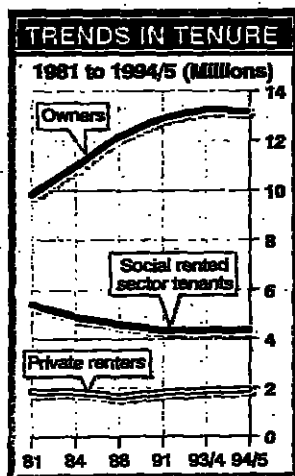
By IAN MURRAY, COMMUNITY CORRESPONDENT

JOB insecurity is reversing the trend towards home ownership, it is reported today. An increasing number of former owners have been trying to find housing from councils or housing associations because their mortgage was no longer affordable or desirable.

The report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that more people are moving out of their own homes into cheap, rented accommodation than are leaving council flats to buy property.

When the Conservative Party came to power in 1979 and started to sell off council houses, 52 per cent of all homes were owner-occupied. The figure reached 67 per cent in 1991 but the rate of increase has slowed so that the current figure is 68 per cent.

Roger Burrows, author of the report, believes the present level is about 5 per cent higher



than the economy can support. He said: "We are going to see more people able to keep up mortgage payments only for four or five years and then having to drop out because they are out of work for a few months."

"After years of hard work, they are forced back into social

housing. There needs to be a whole change in the way mortgages are granted. They could be paid off over two generations. They could be flexible to allow people to pay more when in work and less when they lose their job. There could be flexible tenure with homes part-owned and part-rented."

Two thirds of the 34,000 households moving from subsidised housing into a home of their own in 1994 had two or more working members. A steadily decreasing number of people with dependent children buy their own home. Mr Burrows said that lack of job security also meant that people had to move more often to find work, so that buying a house was less practical.

Contemporary Patterns of Residential Mobility in Relation to Social Housing in England, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 40 Water End, York YO3 6LP, £10

Courtroom whip-round pays rent

BARRISTERS held a whip-round in court after hearing that a mother and her two children would be evicted from their council home unless rent arrears were paid. Tracy Stevenson, 23, owed £60.80 to Braddon council, which was seeking a repossession order, the Isle of Man High Court in Douglas was told.

"They are definitely getting a big thank-you card," Ms Stevenson said yesterday when she learnt that the collection had raised £70. "It's just a voice."

She has lived with her children, David, 6, and Connor, 2, near Douglas since her marriage broke down. She had asked for a week to pay the £60.80 but Peter Saunders, for the council, demanded an immediate possession order. At that Ian Brown, a barrister who was sitting in court, offered to pay the sum himself and organised a collection.

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Former Tory whip to be cleared over Hamilton inquiry

BY ARTHUR LEATHLEY, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE government minister Andrew Mitchell is to be cleared of acting improperly in using his former position as a whip to influence fellow Tories on an investigation into the cash-for-questions affair.

Mr Mitchell, a Social Security Minister, is mildly criticised in a draft report by the Commons disciplinary committee, which says that he showed naivety while serving on an inquiry into accusations that the former Trade Minister Neil Hamilton accepted gifts for tabling questions in the Commons. The inquiry collapsed in 1995 after Labour MPs accused Mr Mitchell of using his position as a whip to force his Tory MPs into line.

The decision to clear Mr Mitchell will come as a relief to John Major, who was forced to accept the resignation of David Willetts, the Paymaster General, when the committee concluded that he had dissembled when giving evidence.

In its report, the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges is expected to criticise senior ministers for appointing Mr Mitchell, as a government whip, to its forerunner, the now defunct Members' Interests Committee. Traditionally only backbench MPs are appointed to such committees.

The report was expected to be finalised in private last

night, but will be put to Mr Mitchell before publication, possibly today. It is expected to denounce the appointment of a government whip to a disciplinary committee and demand that such a move should never be repeated. The report will criticise the way in which the Government Whips' Office, then led by Richard Ryder, the Chief Whip, failed to draw a clear distinction between the roles of government and backbench MPs. The Commons fiercely protects the right of select committees to work independently of government.

Last month Mr Mitchell strongly denied claims that he had used his position to influence Tory MPs and said during a public hearing that he had served on the commit-



Mitchell: accused of acting naively

tee purely in his capacity as MP for Gedling. But MPs were surprised by his claim that he had not known at the time of his appointment that the committee had a quasi-judicial role, and the draft report suggests that he was

Labour tried to exploit a memorandum to Mr Ryder written by Mr Mitchell in October 1994, in which he set out guidance given by a Commons official over Mr Hamilton's line of defence. Labour said the memorandum showed that he was using his position as a whip to gain information that would not be available to other MPs. Mr Mitchell denied the suggestion and the report is expected to support his argument.

The completion of the report on Mr Mitchell clears the last substantial complaint to be considered by the committee before it deals with Mr Hamilton. The committee is anxious to clear the decks of other work before Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, publishes a detailed report into the allegations.

Sir Gordon is taking oral evidence this week from Mr Hamilton and others and hopes to complete his report by the end of the month, when the committee will decide whether to accept the report in full or take further evidence.



Kenneth Clarke, left, leaving the hotel, whisky in hand, and moments later clutching only his cigars

The night that Ken Clarke lost his bottle

BY A STAFF REPORTER

IT MAY have done wonders for party coffers, but the Tories' fundraising winter ball ended in disaster for Kenneth Clarke.

After a champagne and claret-filled evening at which Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare had raised a record £614,000 at auction, Mr Clarke collected his tombola prizes — a bottle of whisky and a brace of Havana cigars — before setting off for home with his wife, Gillian.

But no sooner had he left the Grosvenor House Hotel than the whisky bottle slipped from his hand and shattered on the pavement, leaving him crest-fallen.

Perhaps he was still distracted by the sight earlier of a scantily clad Shirley Bassey gyrating on stage before the

Prime Minister as she sang *Big Spender*. Or he may have thinking of the frenzied bidding, which raised twice as much as any previous Tory auction.

The 1,400 supporters who attended Monday's black-tie party cheered as a leather-bound copy of Norma Major's book, signed by her and the Cabinet, was knocked down for £170,000. An oil painting by the late Victorian artist Stanhope A. Forbes fetched £300,000, 20 times the market value.

Lord Archer ended up selling his two auctioneer's gavels. Neither cost more than £14, yet in the flashy spirit of the occasion they sold for £13,000 and £14,000.

Leading article, page 19

Tories to go ahead with Tube sale plan

By JILL SHERMAN

KENNETH CLARKE confirmed yesterday that the sale of the London Underground would go ahead, saying: "The long march of privatisation is certainly not over yet."

Last week the Government abandoned an announcement about privatising the Tube after a wave of bad publicity suggesting that it would raise little money and be unpopular. But last night the Chancellor made clear that the scheme would proceed and aides said that an announcement would be made within a few weeks.

In a speech to the Centre for Policy Studies, Mr Clarke accused Labour of promoting scare stories intended to undermine the Tube sell-off. He said that the privatisation of British Rail had been given the same treatment. Labour had made claims about cuts in rail services, but the 21 franchises created so far had maintained them and more than half said that they planned to increase them.

Although it is unlikely that the Tories will announce any other big privatisations before the election, he said: "There will be further privatisations in the next five years — privatisations that will benefit the British public and keep us competitive in a tough world trading environment."

He added: "Whether you support privatisation is a litmus test of whether you seriously support free enterprise. New Labour fail that test."

Chancellor sticking to his own tune despite chorus of dissent

Interest rates should rise to prevent an increase in inflation over the next two years. That is the view not only of the Bank of England, as will be clear from its inflation report today, and of City financial markets but also of Treasury officials. But the man who *matters disagrees*. Kenneth Clarke believes that now is not the right time to raise rates again, though it might be during the summer. This dispute goes to the heart of the debate about how far interest rate policy should be taken out of the hands of politicians.

in monetary policy. Building on the initiatives launched by Norman Lamont after Black Wednesday, he has presided over the regular publication both of the minutes of his meetings with the Bank Governor — the “Ken and Eddie show” — and of the Bank’s views in its inflation report without Treasury vetting. But the Chancellor still decides when and by how much interest rates should be changed.

Nigel Lawson and Mr Lamont believe this situation is inherently unstable and would like to make the Bank fully responsible for setting interest rates within a broad

anti-inflation remit set by the Government. John Major, however, had doubts even about how far Mr Clarke has gone, fearing that the Government cannot escape the blame for such decisions.

Many in the City thought the Bank would gain the upper hand since once a dispute between the Chancellor and Governor over raising interest rates became public, the markets would force rates up. This has not happened as Mr

Clarke has been willing, in characteristic fashion, to back his judgment against the experts. He withstood the pressure of Mr. George to raise rates in part of 1995 and was vindicated by events. Since last spring, the Bank has also been more worried about the inflationary risks. Mr. Clarke has allowed rates to rise, but only cautiously. He only agreed to a rise last October to prevent his November Budget being accompanied by speculation about the need for an

Differences between the Bank (and Treasury economists) and Mr

Clarke have increased in recent months, as the published minutes of the meetings have shown. The Bank case is that inflation will not stay within the official target over the next two years unless action is taken now because of the delay before a tightening in policy takes effect. Mr Clarke argues that the Bank is being too pessimistic: retail sales and house prices have not been getting out of control, producer prices are flat and earnings are not accelerating. The strong pound is helping to contain inflation and, contrary to the Bank, he believes that sterling might strengthen in

the short term if rates were raised again. So it is right to wait and see on sound economic grounds, regardless of the fact that an election is just weeks away. The markets are more dubious.

At stake now is Mr Clarke's judgment versus the credibility of counter-inflation policy. Inflation may have been slightly above the official target for almost all the past two years, but it is still low by the standards of the past 30 years, and is rightly trumpeted as a success story for the Tories. But British inflation is still higher than in much of the rest of Europe and

longer-term interest rates remain well above German rates, adding to industry's costs. Gordon Brown will shortly reaffirm the 2% per cent inflation rate and has already suggested setting up a broadly based monetary policy committee at the Bank to reduce the current personalisation of policymaking. But, if he becomes Chancellor, Mr Brown will quickly have to prove he means what he says about low inflation. Almost his first decision may be to raise interest rates, and he will no doubt blame Mr Clarke.

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Arafat hails Israeli release of women as boost for peace

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN RAMALLAH

THE Israeli Government yesterday honoured another key element of the peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation when it began releasing 31 Palestinian women prisoners.

"This is a great contribution to the peace process," said Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, speaking in this self-rule city where he arrived to take part in celebrations to welcome the prisoners. They were supposed to have been freed in September 1995.

Hisham Abdel Razek, a PLO official, said 28 of the women were convicted by Israeli courts of security offences — including two for the murder of Jews — and three for criminal activity unrelated to the Arab-Israeli conflict. He said that one female Palestinian prisoner would remain behind bars in Israel — a 15-year-old arrested two weeks ago after allegedly attempting to stab an Israeli soldier.

All those released yesterday had to sign statements promising not to take part in terrorist activities.

The decision to release the women, despite fierce opposition from hardliners and relatives of Israelis killed in terror attacks, was part of the US-brokered deal which led to last month's Israeli withdrawal from most of Hebron.

The release of the women had been delayed when President Weizman refused to sign pardons for those convicted of attacks in which Jews had been killed. The others refused to leave jail in solidarity. Last week, the Israeli Cabinet

announced that the President had relented and agreed to the pardons. The final obstacle to the releases was cleared on Monday when the High Court rejected a legal attempt, filed by the Israeli Terror Victims' Association, to block the move.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, said yesterday his Government was fulfilling a commitment made by its Labour predecessor. "I want to make it clear that we expect the Palestinian side to fulfil all its obligations, beginning with the obligations to

stop any presence or political activity in Jerusalem," he said. "And we intend to keep them to this standard... on the matter of Jerusalem, we are not going to make any calculations. There are Palestinian offices there, they will be shut down. Period."

The first woman set free was Lanya Maarouf, a 32-year-old Brazilian, who was arrested in 1986 for driving a car in which an Israeli soldier, David Mannos, was kidnapped. He was killed and she was sentenced by a military court to 25 years in jail. Palestinian officials said last night that she would be deported.

Others due to secure their freedom were named by Palestinian sources as May Ghusein, 23, who was arrested on security charges in 1991 and later confessed to killing an alleged collaborator in jail, and Abeer al-Wuhaidi, 27, who was sentenced to 17 years in prison in 1992 for belonging to a Palestinian cell which murdered a Jewish settler.

Last night, some relatives of Jews killed by Arabs said they felt betrayed by Mr Netanyahu's decision to sanction the releases.

Yehudit Shahar, whose son Uri was murdered by Palestinians near Jericho two years ago, said she felt like "a wounded man who is left in the battlefield". She added that, although she had voted for Mr Netanyahu in last year's election, she now felt she had really voted for Shimon Peres, the defeated Labour Party contender.



An Israeli in an Arafat mask protesting at the Prime Minister's office against the releases

Jets launch raids on Lebanon

FROM ROSS DUNN IN JERUSALEM

ISRAELI fighter planes launched a series of attacks against guerrilla targets in Lebanon yesterday, wounding three suspected guerrillas and a civilian, security sources said.

The jets also destroyed a radio transmission antenna used by the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement in the

Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon. Later, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command said that Israeli jets had also fired rockets into the seaside Naameh hills south of Beirut.

Muhammad Yaghi, Hezbollah's Bekaa official, said that the raids were in breach of the understanding of the rules of engagement, which forbid attacks on civilian areas. "We will step up our

attacks against Israeli forces in south Lebanon... let them know that we are able and that the struggle with them will continue until we kick them out of our land," Mr Yaghi said.

But during a visit to Israel's northern border yesterday, Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, said he was against any unilateral withdrawal of his forces from south Lebanon.



Cambodian health officials trumpet a campaign to distribute oral polio vaccine in a Phnom Penh suburb yesterday. The authorities have launched an immunisation programme aimed at eradicating the virus

Sixth plea for Biko amnesty

Cape Town: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission disclosed yesterday that a sixth policeman was applying for amnesty in connection with the death of Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness leader (Inigo Gilmore writes).

The commission also welcomed the decision by Biko's family to oppose the amnesty applications of five policemen who have confessed to involvement in his death.

Dumisa Ntsebeza, the head of the commission's investigative unit, said that a sixth person was applying and had engaged a separate lawyer from the other five applicants to handle his case. But he refused to identify the new applicant.

Biko, who died in police custody in 1977, suffered brain damage allegedly as a result of being beaten by security police. Five former policemen from Port Elizabeth applied for amnesty from the reconciliation commission last month over their involvement in his death.

Plethora of Clinton judges worries conservatives

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

CONSERVATIVE groups in America are seeking to slow President Clinton's appointments to the judiciary, urging the Senate to impose restrictions in its consideration of all new federal judges.

By the end of his second term, Mr Clinton could become the only President to have filled more than half the federal bench with his own appointments. Many Republicans fear that these "activist" judges will not merely destroy the conservative legacies of Presidents Reagan and Bush, but also undermine Americans' constitutional rights.

Mr Clinton appointed 202 judges in his first term. There are 80 vacancies at present and another 150 judges are expected to retire during the next four years. Assuming that he survives his second Administration, the President could appoint more than half the judiciary of 837 by the millennium, Mr Reagan selected 378. If Chief Justice William

Rehnquist and Associate Justice Paul Stevens, of the Supreme Court, retire, as they have signalled they may, then Mr Clinton could also become the first President since Richard Nixon drastically to alter the bench's delicate balance of power by appointing four new judges to the Supreme Court.

A coalition of 260 conservative organisations, led by the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, has launched a campaign for greater scrutiny of judicial appointments to slow what has traditionally been a matter of political bartering.

"It is a crisis. He is already close to appointing the majority of appeals court judges in some of the circuits," Tom Jipping, a foundation director said. "Judges are not supposed to be activists who make the law. If we had a judiciary that was more restrained... we would have a political system that was more dynamic."

Republicans in the Senate are debating a set of controversial proposals that would alter the nomination process significantly. The most radical one would require Mr Clinton to clear nominees with the Senate in advance and perhaps even to reserve a percentage of vacancies for Republicans.

Democrats say that Mr Clinton's appointments are moderate and that the President has been more interested in introducing a greater level of diversity to the court system. Almost a third of his judges are women, 19 per cent are black, 7 per cent are Hispanic and 2 per cent Asian or native American.

The Senate is concerned that any changes may affect a time-honoured "pact" on pushing through legislation in return for swift appointments. But Trent Lott, the Senate Majority Leader, and Orrin Hatch, chairman of the judiciary committee, have shown little inclination to speed the nomination process.

Sri Lanka MP killed in clash

Colombo: A Sri Lankan government MP and a bodyguard were shot dead and five others, including an MP, were injured in a clash between supporters of the ruling People's Alliance and the opposition United National Party (Vijitha Yapa writes).

Nalanda Ellawela, 29, was shot in the stomach at Kuruwita, 45 miles southeast of Colombo. Police said they were seeking a UNP MP and the Mayor of Ratnapura, believed to have been present.

Lima holding talks with rebels

The Peruvian Government and Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement rebels were due to begin talks in a safe house outside the Japanese Ambassador's residence, where rebels still hold 72 hostages (Gabriella Gammari writes). It will be the second meeting since the residence was seized on December 17.

US crash fears halt training

Washington: The US Air Force has suspended all training flights over the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico (Tom Rhodes writes). The Federal Aviation Administration reported that three F16 fighters flew too close to passenger aircraft on two separate occasions last week.

Sicilian Mafia suspects held

Palermo: Police arrested five suspected mobsters, including Domenico Cancelliere, 37, the alleged Mafia boss for the Sicilian capital. In a separate incident Francesco Federico, 55, a retired police officer, was accused of colluding with the Mafia. (AFP)

Case crumbles

Bruges: Officials decided not to press charges against Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Belgian Prime Minister, for feeding bread to sparrows in violation of a city law that took effect on December 17. (AFP)

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Steamy novels in readers' bad books

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK

REDUCED advances and slipping sales have led New York publishers to concede that one of the most vigorous fiction genres of recent decades, the "sex 'n' shopping" novel ("bonkbuster" in British parlance), is over.

Leading exponents such as Jackie Collins, Judith Krantz and Barbara Taylor Bradford are no longer commanding the respect or financial reward that they did a couple of years ago. Judith Regan, one of the best regarded publishers in Manhattan, announced: "The shopping-and-sex novel is dead."

Advances have been more than halved and to widespread surprise the latest Jackie Collins title, *Vendetta*, failed to enter the bestseller charts at number one (as most of its predecessors did). Instead, it limped in at number 12.

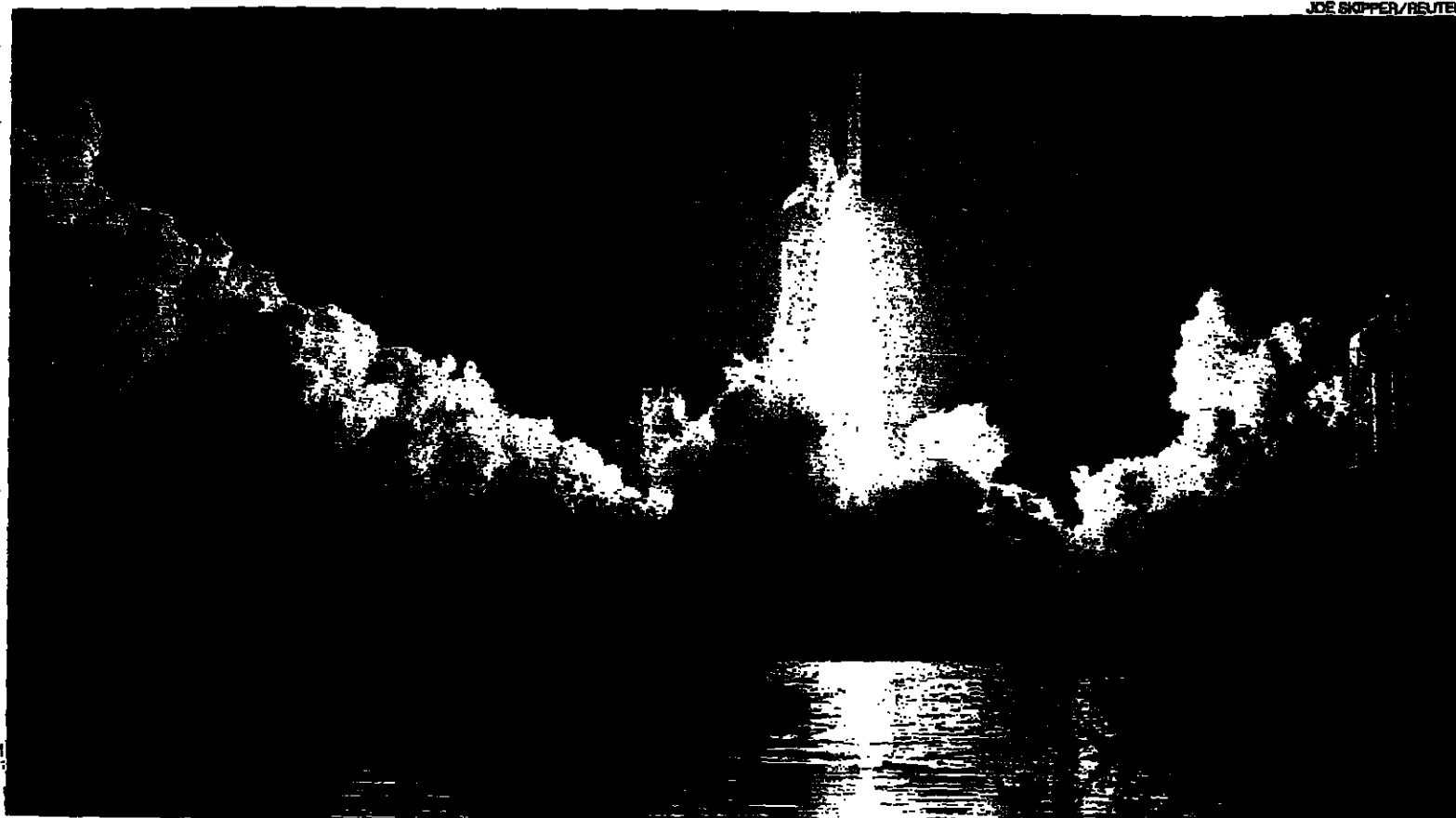
Publishers who once would fete bonkbuster novelists with flowers, grand lunches and limousine lip-service now find that their diaries are too full. Numerous "glamour" authors, as they prefer to be called, have changed publishing houses recently, with an increasing number heading for smaller, specialty firms that are more prepared to make an effort on marketing.

Doris Mortman, the author of such fragrant epics as *First Born*, *Circles* and *Wild Rose*, had a relative dud with her last book, *True Colours*. In past years she received seven-figure advances, but for her next effort she will be receiving a fraction of that from an independent publisher.

The passing of the genre will rob publishing of some of its jolliest excesses. With it will pass the age of the mist-fringed author publicity snapshot, a miracle of photography which turned plump, beady-eyed divas into big-haired, scarlet-lipped beauties.

"People are more interested now in legal thrillers — perhaps because they reflect more accurately the legal problems which can arise in modern life," said John Baker, a prominent trade paper, *The Publishers Weekly*, a prominent trade paper. The bestseller lists now resound to names such as Patricia Cornwell, John Grisham, Michael Crichton and Scott Turow.

Lou Aronica, the head of Avon Books, said yesterday: "People are no longer interested in reading about conspicuous consumption and sex without love. They want more soulful stuff, deeper emotions."



The Discovery space shuttle blasts into orbit yesterday from Cape Canaveral, Florida, on a ten-day mission to service the Hubble space telescope. The seven-man crew will rendezvous with the Hubble, 360 miles above the Earth, early today to modernise some of the telescope's instruments.

Russia 'needs policy of first-use nuclear strike'

BY ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

PRESIDENT Yeltsin's chief security adviser said yesterday that Russia should be prepared to use nuclear weapons if it faced a conventional attack.

The Foreign Ministry intervened to point out that the remarks by Ivan Rybkin, Secretary of the Security Council, were "purely hypothetical".

However, his warning in an interview with the government newspaper, *Russkaya Gazeta*, has come at a time when Moscow is stepping up opposition to Nato's enlargement plans. Mr Rybkin referred to a pledge by Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Soviet President, not to resort to nuclear weapons first in any conflict.

Mr Rybkin said that that promise had been made without any consultation and against the spirit of decades of developing a nuclear shield.

Mr Rybkin said: "Who will provide us with a guarantee against... threats abroad? There cannot be any such guarantee. So everyone should be aware that in the event of a direct challenge to our national security, we would respond with all available means, with the options including nuclear arms."

A "no first use" policy was initially adopted by President Brezhnev in 1982. Nato never followed suit because of Russia's superiority in conventional arms. Nato wanted the right to resort to a limited nuclear strike in the event of being overwhelmed by conventional forces. That was a key element of Nato policy during the Cold War. Although Mr Gorbachev reiterated the "no first use" policy, Nato still decided



Rybkin: "We would use all available means"

means, with the options including nuclear arms."

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against a similar strategy. The Russian position was overturned in 1993 with the publication of Russia's new military doctrine. This stated that Russia would not use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear state which had signed the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But it reserved the right to use nuclear weapons against a state which either had an agreement with a nuclear power or joined forces with a nuclear nation in mounting a conventional attack on Russia.

Mr Rybkin appeared to go one step further yesterday by suggesting that Moscow should be ready to resort to nuclear weapons against any conventionally armed aggressor. He said there was a danger that Russia's military decline since Soviet times could provide a temptation to "military adventurers".

"Naturally, we are not talking about a pre-emptive nuclear strike, but if an aggressor starts a conflict against us with conventional weapons, we may resort to nuclear weapons to provide a decisive response," he said.

Mr Rybkin's remarks represented the most controversial intervention he has made since taking over as Mr Yeltsin's chief security adviser from Aleksandr Lebed last summer. His stewardship of the Security Council until now has been characterised by diplomacy and caution.

Mr Rybkin said he had "big doubts" about previous statements that Russia would not be the first side to use nuclear weapons in a conflict. With Russia's conventional forces in a chaotic state, the nuclear arsenal had become even more important.

Despite Moscow's stand against Nato expansion, Interfax news agency quoted a senior government source as saying: "We have stated more than once that we do not view any country or group of countries as an enemy. This refers to Nato as well."

Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the Kremlin spokesman, said that statements on the "strategic position" could be made only by the President, Prime Minister or Foreign Minister.

Letters, page 19

Wolves safe to prosper in free market turmoil

FROM RICHARD BESTON
IN MOSCOW

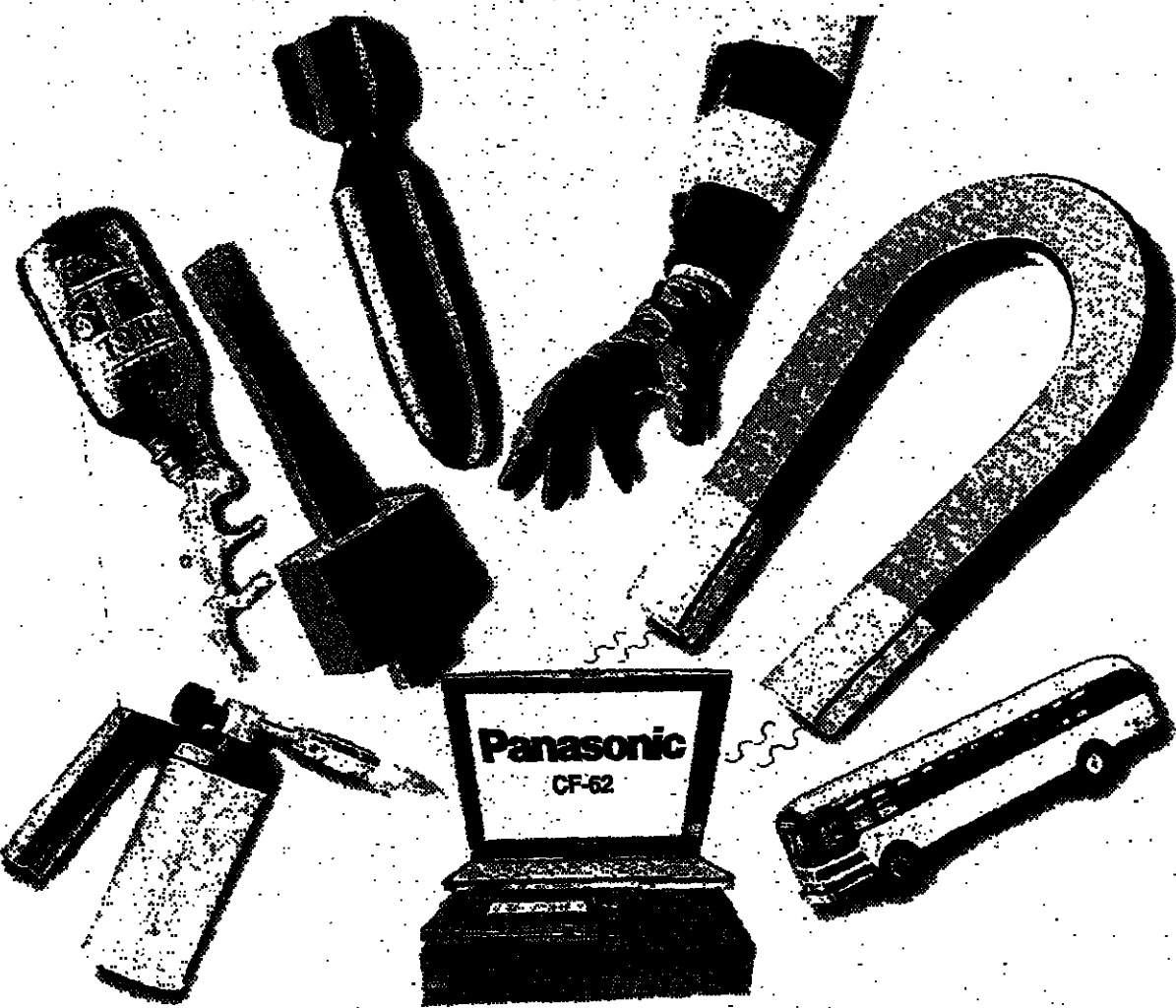
THE wolf, for centuries the most feared predator in rural Russia, is taking advantage of the country's current state of chaos to stage an impressive and menacing comeback.

In a move which has worried farmers

and environmentalists, not to mention little children, the Russian wolf is enjoying a renaissance from the Baltic states to the Pacific seaboard and has even returned to the heavily populated regions of central Russia, where its numbers have swelled to 40,000.

During the Soviet period, the wolf population was culled every year in a

government-funded programme, but in the past six turbulent years of economic and political turbulence funding has dried up and the wolves have seized the initiative. In remote regions, packs of wolves are seriously depleting other wildlife, particularly deer and wild boar. The beasts are also increasingly targeting livestock and domestic animals.



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The snow goose, an example of conservation gone wrong

Cries for a cull as snow goose numbers soar to 'near plague'

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

SCIENTISTS and conservationists in North America say hunters should be unleashed on the snow goose, at risk only three decades ago but now a threat to the environment and other wildlife.

The numbers nesting in summer on the banks of Hudson Bay in Canada has tripled to three million since the 1960s, when sanctuaries were first set aside for the geese as they migrated northwards. That, and changing farming methods in their winter nesting areas, has created a near plague.

Broad tracts of Canadian tundra have been devastated by the geese, which use their powerful beaks to rip away vegetation. Goslings, although unable to fly, have reportedly walked some 40 miles inland from Hudson Bay in search of food.

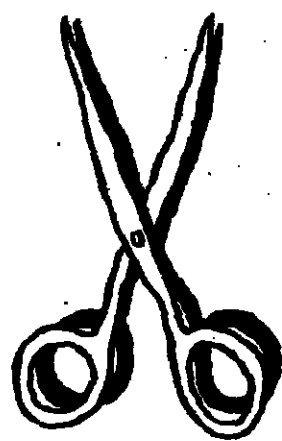
Other birdlife has suffered, too, and at a meeting in Houston, Texas, next week, ornithologists are expected to call for a cull. Bruce Batt, a leading conservationist and chief biologist for the waterfowl organisation Ducks Unlimited, has recommended

that hunters be allowed to shoot greater numbers of the birds.

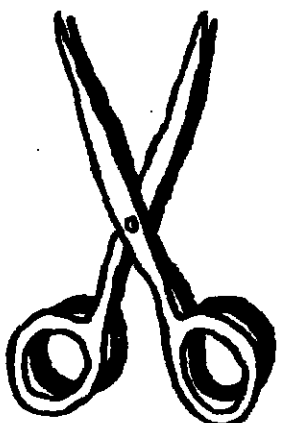
In the 1970s no-hunting zones were established and the winter-resting habitats for the geese in America's warm south were transformed into agricultural lands, providing greater food supplies for the birds. Then a comparatively warm period in Canada in the early 1980s increased reproduction rates.

Mr Batt told *The New York Times* that the geese were "on a collision course" with nature, threatening the ecosystem. Another ornithologist, Robert Rockwell of New York's City University, said large areas of tundra were becoming "a spreading slum".

The story is a classic of benevolent conservation gone wrong. Experts are expected to agree next week that snow goose numbers should be halved by 2005, while not wasting "these marvellous birds". Generally less fatty than the normal restaurant bird, the snow goose has a stronger flavour. It roasts well and makes a pleasing fricassee.



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Spanish villagers defy protest to hold donkey fiesta

A STARK clash of cultures, centred on the welfare of a light grey donkey, took place yesterday in Villanueva de la Vera, pitting animal rights activists from all over Europe against stubborn Spanish peasants determined to preserve their way of life.

Every year on Shrove Tuesday this tiny mountain village in western Spain is the venue of a raucous fiesta called "Palo Palo", named after a medieval blackguard who was hanged in the village square. The fiesta, however, has attracted passionate criticism in recent years from animal rights activists, who allege that the villagers are unnecessarily cruel to the donkey which plays a central role in the festivities.

British interest in the event has always been high, peaking some years ago when a beast called "Blackie" was purchased from the village by the *Daily Star* and despatched to a donkey sanctuary in Devon.

The controversial ritual consists of a large man — by repute, the heaviest in the region — riding the length of the village astride a donkey. Man and beast are surrounded at all times by a boisterous, drunken mob of revellers, who propel the donkey on its way, pushing and shoving it as they sing centuries-old songs. Confetti-filled blank cartridges are



Horrified animal lovers failed to stop the festivities for a tiny mountain community, Tunku Varadarajan reports

fired into the air and the noise is deafening.

Since the streets are narrow and packed with people, the donkey occasionally falls to the ground, only to be hauled to its feet again by the mob. No one — not even diehard villagers — argues that the beast has anything but a rough time. The key question, however, is this: does the rough handling, done without malice, constitute such cruelty to the donkey as to deserve worldwide condemnation?

The activists have always thought that it does. Large numbers descended on the village yesterday — from Britain, France, Germany and Spain itself — fuelling the anger of its sozzled celebrants with their leaflets. The Devon-based International Donkey Protection Trust was the particular target for abuse because it had published advertisements condemning the fiesta in the Spanish press, urging concerned readers to telephone the village hall in protest.

"They should not have put

ads in the Spanish papers," complained Antonio Caperote, the village's Mayor. "Although the advertisement was full of lies, I had people ringing me all day from Madrid and Barcelona, calling me and my family 'murderers'."

The activists tried to win over the villagers, without success. Joel Gabrielli, a Frenchman from the Brigitte Bardot Foundation for animal welfare, provoked howls of laughter when he suggested to villagers that they use "a bicycle or a motorcycle instead of a donkey".

Paul Svendsen, of the Donkey Trust, also earned scorn when he urged the *campesinos* to use "a large stuffed donkey doll on wheels". Ana Vallejo, of the Spanish Association for the Defence of Animals, touched a raw nerve when she declared that "the European Commission should ban such a cruel and shameful spectacle". "You know what Europe can do with its rules," an old woman growled darkly.

The fiesta itself appeared to



A donkey is pulled out of the crowd during the annual fiesta in a village in western Spain which has been targeted by animal rights activists

pass without brutality to the donkey. This reporter felt a greater concern for the man riding on its back, who was slapped all over his body — good-naturedly, but very hard — for almost two hours, with litres of alcohol forced down his throat by villagers along

the way. Occasionally, the donkey too was given a drink of wine by hands pressed through the crush. At the end of its bumpy outing, though, the beast seemed fine, and was able to trot off when the fat man finally got off its back.

The greatest danger was

faced by cameramen from a number of international newspapers, news agencies and television channels. The young men of the village bear rancour towards journalists. Cameramen were punched and sworn at, and I had a shotgun go off so close to my

left cheek that I could feel the heat from the barrel. Yet the prevailing spirit was one of jollity, with villagers eager to explain their rituals to outsiders. Much ire, however, was reserved for the British, who are blamed for all the unwelcome attention. An ag-

tated old man grabbed me and said: "Look — all those cameras: they're English. Those bastards think we're savages, but we're only having fun. We have done so here for centuries, and we're not going to change now, even if the Queen of England tells us to."

Secret tapes spark Gibraltar row over shipyard closure

FROM DOMINIC SEARLE IN GIBRALTAR

THE demise of Gibraltar's shipyard, run by the Norwegian shipping giant Kvaerner, was at the centre of a political storm last night.

Tape recordings of telephone conversations by union activists, released by the Government to the media, suggested a cynical attempt to exploit and encourage the closure as part of an attempt to regain political ground.

The yard's shutdown, with a loss of 138 jobs, was announced by Kvaerner last week after nearly 70 workers rejected an offer guaranteeing them their income, but requiring them to work at any hours set by management. The unions had claimed the company was seeking to bypass European Union directives that limit working hours.

Last week Peter Caruana, the Chief Minister, would only say that he had evidence that activists within Gibraltar's Socialist Labour Party were "agitating to bring about the



Bossano: accused Chief Minister of lying

closure of the yard, in the knowledge of the party leadership, and to create problems for the Gibraltar Social Democrat Government."

That was promptly and categorically denied by Joe Bossano, the Opposition leader, who accused Mr Caruana of lying.

The Government was passed a tape recording apparently made from a cordless telephone in which an activist

named as Charles Robbia, a labour party executive member, describes plans to stir up workers against Jaime Natta, the Labour Minister, and states to Rose Bossano, the Opposition leader's wife, that the yard would have to close and "that will be a blessing — 200 people on the street".

In one exchange, Mr Bossano, branch officer of the Transport & General Workers Union until he became Chief Minister in 1988, urges that the current district officer, Luis Montiel, should be kept away from the yard dispute so he could be a leading figure on the issue.

The release of the tapes, played by local radio at lunchtime yesterday, will fuel the bitter exchanges that characterised the election campaign in which Mr Caruana came to power last May.

The yard, also a Royal Navy ship facility until 1984, has three dry docks but has always encountered labour cost problems. Workers share parity agreements with British

Aid pioneer quits Paris for Sudan

Paris: Bernard Kouchner, the former Cabinet minister, humanitarian activist and one-time star of the French Left, announced yesterday he was quitting the "vile" politics of France to care for the sick and destitute in Sudan (Ben Macintyre writes).

M Kouchner, 57, a doctor who founded the Médecins sans Frontières charity in 1971, has been turned down as a parliamentary candidate for next year's elections and claimed yesterday to have been "stabbed in the back" by his former Socialist allies. M Kouchner told French radio he would make a final appearance at a meeting of his tiny Radical Socialist Party on March 8.

"That evening I will leave for southern Sudan, where I have a hospital, to care for people in misery," he said.

As President Mitterrand's Health Minister, M Kouchner was the most popular politician in France. Since the 1993 Socialist defeat, he has fallen out of favour.

Troubled Kohl nails his colours to euro

FROM PETER BILD IN BONN

WITH unemployment at a record high and plans to reform Germany's tax and pension systems in tatters, Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor, is pinning his political hopes on a new campaign to force through European monetary union.

In an hour-long interview with French television, Herr Kohl told doubters in Germany, including influential figures in his own alliance, against making political capital by opposing EMU. A campaign against European union, with monetary union at its heart, would lead to "dra-

matic defeat" when Germany goes to the polls in 1998, Herr Kohl said.

Political insiders in Bonn say the Chancellor's new campaign on monetary union represents a bold bid to reassert his crumbling personal and political authority. The German press is talking of the end of an era and speculating about his likely successor.

Meanwhile Herr Kohl repeats his breezy assurances that he will choose his own time to announce whether or not he wants to run for office again in 1998. But the assurances no longer evoke the

same knee-jerk pleas from Cabinet colleagues for him to lead them at the next election.

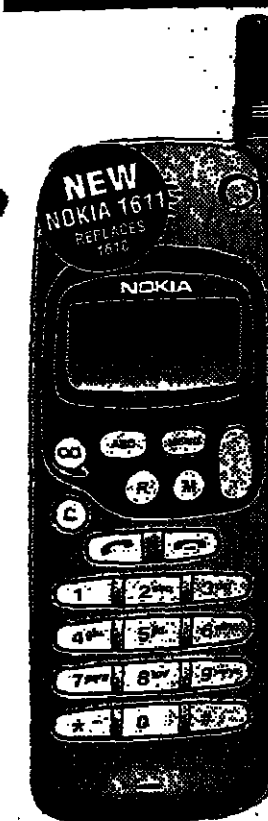
The Chancellor's warnings about the danger of campaigning on an anti-EMU platform are also seen as a way to sow dissent in a newly confident Opposition. Under Oskar Lafontaine, the Social Democrats have recovered from a slump and are running neck-and-neck with Herr Kohl's Christian Democrat Union in opinion polls.

But in an attempt to head off the emergence of personal rivalries, the party has deferred choosing its candidate

for 1998. The polls show Gerhard Schröder, the prime minister of Lower Saxony, as the man best placed to topple Herr Kohl. Herr Schröder is also a Euro-sceptic and the polls still show Germans opposed to replacing the mark with the euro.

But Bonn observers say Herr Kohl is gambling on winning over the public by contrasting an inward-looking Opposition with a man of international vision. However, the failure to stem the rising tide of unemployment has weakened the Chancellor's political authority.

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Strasbourg express drives champagne growers off the rails

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

PRODUCERS of champagne grapes have attacked plans to build a high-speed rail link through their vineyards, claiming the railway embankments will cause heavier frosts and may take the sparkle out of their famous fizz.

A new TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse) line is currently under construction from Paris to Strasbourg, which will eventually bring trains, at speeds of up to 220mph, through the great champagne vineyards of Reims and the slopes of Rheims mountain.

Local vignerons are already demanding state compensation on the grounds that the construction project could affect grape production in vineyards abutting the line. Many of France's premier champagne houses, including Moët & Chandon, Taittinger and Laurent Perrier, buy grapes from the region. Philippe Feneuil, president of the Champagne Vinegrowers' Union, said yesterday.

A new vinegrowers' lobby group, calling itself the TGV association, standing for *Très Grande Vigilance*, recently commissioned a scientific sur-

vey which its says has confirmed their fears.

In his report Gérard Beltrando, a "climatologist" from the University of Paris, concluded that "the future TGV East line... will prevent the flow of cold air towards the plain in sections with embankments. There is a risk of heavier frost."

In vineyards planted on hillsides, cold air tends to accumulate at the bottom of the slope. M Beltrando claims that if this "lake of freezing air" is blocked between the hill and the planned railway embankment, the temperature in vineyards next to the track could be reduced by as much as two degrees, altering the all-important *terroir* which lends the grapes their distinctive characteristics. In particularly hard winters, the entire grape harvest could be wiped out, M Feneuil said.

The study has been challenged by the state-owned rail company SNCF. The SNCF is already saddled with £25 billion of debt, much of it left over from building the TGV network.

One solution would be to build holes at regular intervals through the embankment, allowing the free circulation of air. Another would be to construct a viaduct over the vineyards, but both options would add to the cost of the project.

"This study is simply an attempt to defend the interests of small vinegrowers who have a few acres of land but mountains of uncertainty," M Pittois, head of the TGV association, said.

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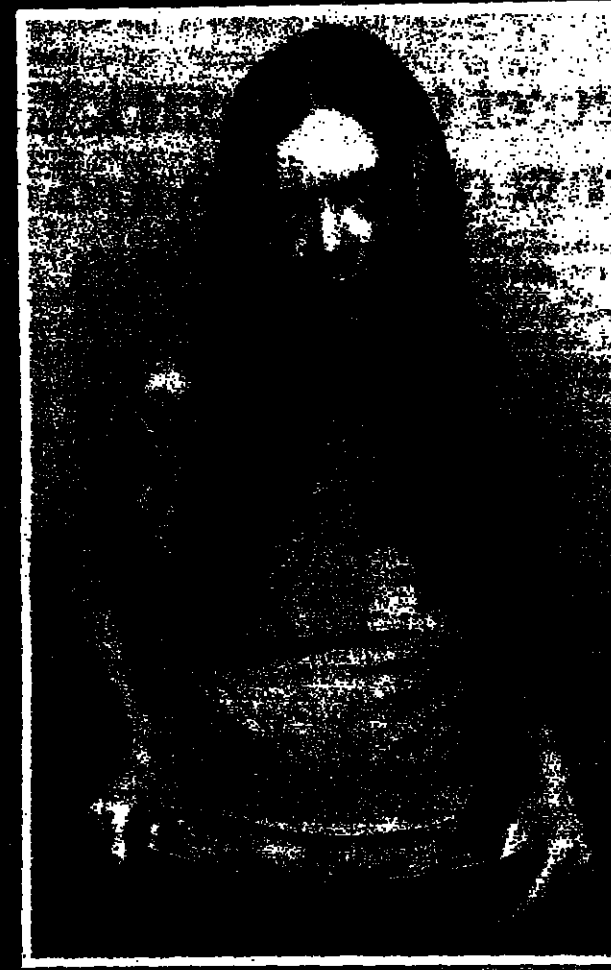
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OF all the murky areas in the cloud of unknowing that hovers between men and women, artfully rendering the sexes largely incomprehensible to each other, one of the murkiest is that of shopping.

Men, or more precisely Englishmen, do not understand the first thing about shopping. They are bad on all aspects of this activity (if you do not believe me, try the following experiment: send the nearest man to the nearest supermarket with a short list of essential items — washing powder, free-range eggs — printed in big black felt-tip letters on lined paper. He will return laden with six carrier bags containing horned melons and Comptel and wasabe paste and absolutely no washing powder at all, and will then pronounce at length on the dullness of the list and the lack of imaginative flair of women when it comes to groceries).

But if you really want to lob a bomb into your domestic routine, the best way to do it is to announce, quite quietly, that you fancy a little spot of window-shopping.

It is well documented already that the only shop an Englishman ever voluntarily enters is the ironmongers. Shopping for their own clothes

men regard as a painful duty, to be undertaken only as a last resort. The kind of shopping that women go in for — looking in more than one place, sometimes for hours at a time, quite often without

clothes shopping — that it has no connection with the brutish fulfilment of a need for warmth or decency, but is nothing less than an act of seduction. To set out in search of a new dress is like the beginning of a love affair. The moment of capture is all very well, but the pleasure, the skill, the real excitement of the whole thing lie

mainly in the pursuit. What is taking place, in that deceptively aimless process of drifting from MaxMara to Chanel to Donna Karan, trying on in each place an apparently identical cream wool shift dress, is a small ritual of fantasy and

desire — Retail Foreplay, you might call it. The rails of clothes shops are stocked with other stories, other lives, any of which (or so it seems, when one is in a mood to shop) can be yours for the plucking of a garment from a hanger. The frock that gets to go home with you is, quite simply, the one

that tells you what you most want to hear about yourself at that moment. And, should you find, the morning after, that you've made a ghastly mistake, you've got the perfect excuse for taking it back and beginning the whole delicious process all over again.

JANE SHILLING GETS DRESSED

buying a single thing at the end of it all — most Englishmen regard as not just morally suspect, but actually mad.

On the Continent, of course, they do things differently. There, the chape underground the fundamental truth about

mainly in the pursuit. What is taking place, in that deceptively aimless process of drifting from MaxMara to Chanel to Donna Karan, trying on in each place an apparently identical cream wool shift dress, is a small ritual of fantasy and

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■ Is there anything anywhere that is not out to peck us?

Much as I hate the thought of any of my dear readers, even before this close, crying "Right, that's it!" and turning irritably to the crossword, I no less hate the thought of wasting their precious time. I therefore feel caring-bound to say that if you are someone who thinks that there is quite enough to worry about as it is, today's cobbling is not for you. Racked as you already are by agonies over monetary union, ozone holes, NHS underfunding, mislaid Ukrainian warheads, environmental pollution, prison policy, collision-course asteroids, Chinese ambitions, greenbelt despoliation, royal yachts, mad cows, blazing Chunnels, millennial profligacy, Internetted smut, nursery vouchers, drug abuse, privacy invasion, and the 89 diseases from which you began suffering, the instant Dr. Stuttsford finished describing their symptoms, I urge you to seek a safer haven than this. You do not want to hear what follows.

At a little before noon yesterday, having spent several hours in the attic groping for syllables, I threw open the window to expel the thick blue smoke of an emptied pack — neighbours of the disposition of those readers now no longer with us will immediately have slammed their shut in terror — and went downstairs to make a sandwich. It was a good sandwich, fresh crusty wholemeal bread, thickly buttered, embracing several slices of best Scotch smoked salmon, and about to be made even better by the large glass of Meursault now being brought upstairs with it. Since, however, it could be made better yet by the wedge of lemon I had forgotten to bring, I put the plate on my desk, and ran downstairs again.

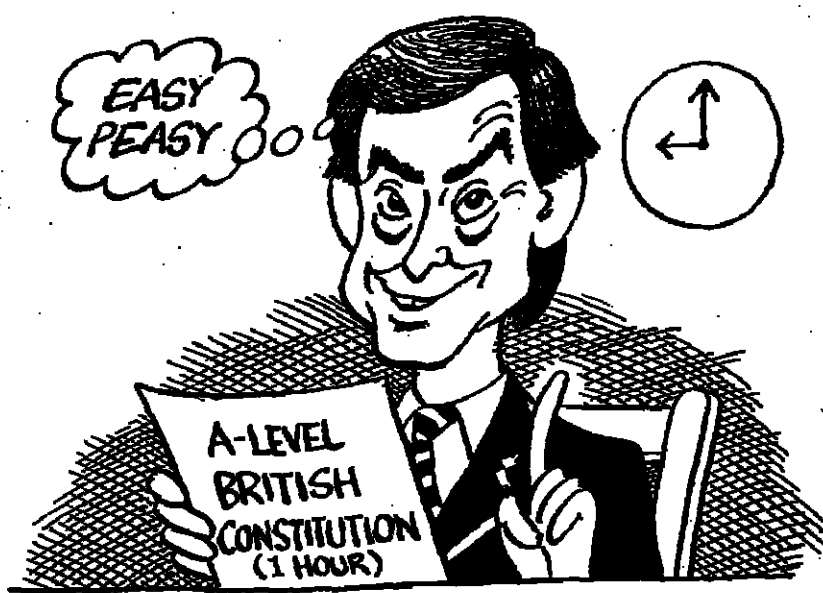
When I returned to the attic, it was immediately borne in upon me that the sandwich might, in my absence, have become not quite as good as it had been when I left. That is because there was a pigeon standing on it. It did not stand there long, choosing instead to take off again through the accessing window at a speed and trajectory which would have left its clay cousin at the post, but what I did not know was how long it had been standing on my sandwich before I had come back. I had been away for perhaps a minute, and while it was possible that the pigeon had flown in and landed only a second before I returned, it was equally possible that it had been there for the full 60. It might, in short, have had the time not just to stand on the sandwich, but to walk about on it. Or round it, pecking as it went. It was important for me to know these things, for while I am not — unlike the dear readers no longer with us — a person to worry unduly about the risk of a pigeon's footstep, the thought that the bird's beak might have had a go at my lunch, drilling into it with a beak recently used for dismembering worms, was a different matter.

I examined the sandwich for beak-holes. I even took a magnifying-glass to it. However, since wholemeal bread has, as you know, an open weave, in order to determine whether the dozens of little holes in it were made by a pigeon or merely by a baker, you would have to know the diameter of a pigeon's beak. Odd, how a man can get to my age and not know something like that. The only option was to lift the bread and see whether there was a hole in the salmon. There was not. But, as I closed the sandwich again, raised it, and prepared to bite into it, I suddenly wondered whether I might have been unwisely blasé about the footstep.

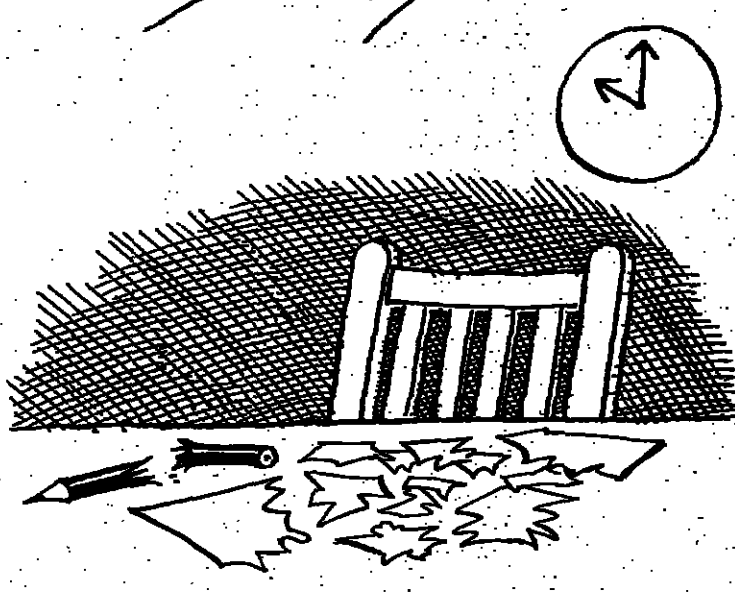
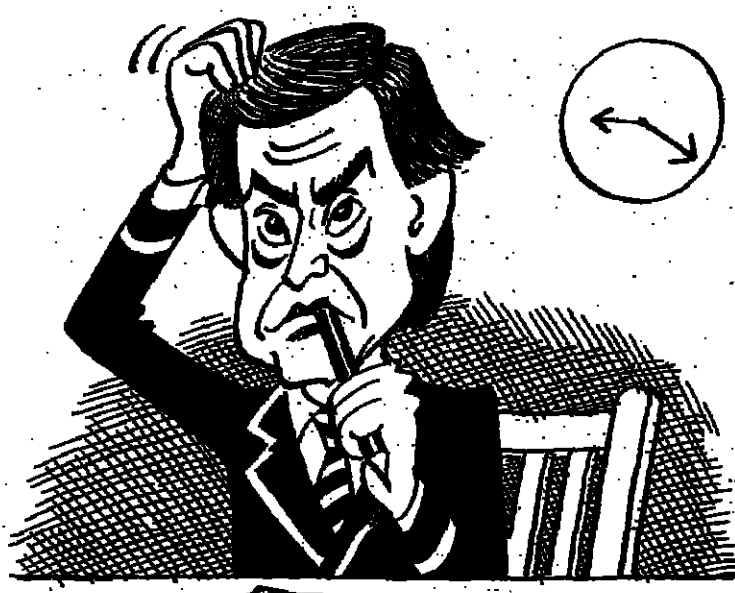
I put the sandwich down again, and rang the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It would have been more logical, of course, to ring the Royal Society for the Protection of Humans, but it wasn't listed. Was there, I inquired, any disease that a man could catch off a pigeon?

You know the answer. Would I have warned off all those dear readers, otherwise? The answer is that there is almost no disease that a man cannot catch off a pigeon, there is pigeon-fanciers lung, there is pigeon-rhine dermatitis, there is ornithosis, chlamydia, iritis, salmonella.

I threw the sandwich in the bin, thinking: is there anything anywhere which is not out to get us, given half a chance? If it ever emerges that crosswords cause brain damage, the responsibility could kill me.



John Brooks 12.11.97



Dorrell's dumb question

A British politician is never so ludicrous as when chanting the "West Lothian question". The question is a monster. It threatens John Major's United Kingdom. Asking it brings a tremble to the lips of his short-lived constitutional spokesman, Stephen Dorrell. The Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, sees the question as a Presbyterian menace to all that is most holy and most Tory. Nor can Labour meet its awesome logic. The West Lothian question is like squaring the circle and hunting the Snark. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

Funny that the Americans cracked it in 1776. Funny that Spanish and Italian politicians do not toss and turn all night over it. Funny that constitution pundits from Canada to Cape Town, from Switzerland to Delhi, have found the answer. Only in Britain is the world still flat and resting on turtles.

The question is as follows. How can it be fair for a Scottish MP to rule England from Westminster when an English MP cannot rule Scotland from a proposed Scottish parliament in Edinburgh? The question seems to blow every intellectual fuse. It reduces Mr Forsyth to the pose of Rodin's *Thinker*. Nor may lessons be drawn from abroad. A foreign answer to the West Lothian question cannot apply. So let us stay at home. In Belfast last week I witnessed at work what Mr Major proclaims he most fears: a "devolved democratic assembly with tax-raising powers". It is Belfast City Council, its taxing discretion — to levy a 5p in the pound property tax for tourism, arts and economic development — was granted by Mr Major himself in 1992. Similar councils in England, Wales and Scotland are rate-capped and enjoy no such powers. Northern Ireland is unique.

This modest discretion has not led to the "break-up" of Ulster, but to the opposite, an impressive local instance of power-sharing. Sinn Féin and the DUP sit round the table with the established nationalist and Unionist parties to run an as-yet limited range of activities. The practice is being repeated in a dozen other local councils across the Province. Yet Mr Major dare not bestow, since it drives a coach and horses through his opposition to such powers for cities elsewhere.

This fiscal devolution is not all. Up the road at Stormont Castle, Mr Major's team is hard at work trying to persuade Northern Ireland's senior politicians to

Scottish devolution sends the Tories into panic, but the solution to the West Lothian conundrum is clear from Ulster

accept a devolved regional assembly. Ever since 1985, London has been cajoling, bribing and threatening them to accept a version of the old Stormont. Many Ulster people rightly fear that such an assembly would be unstable. It would exacerbate group tension and might indeed threaten the Union, as it did in the 1970s. The British Cabinet seems careless of this risk. Yet precisely such an institution, located in Edinburgh, would apparently "lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom". The Scots say overwhelmingly in polls that they want a "Stormont". Mr Major calls them little short of traitors.

On Monday, Mr Dorrell trotted to the BBC's *Today* programme to explain a bizarre interview he had given to *The Scotsman* and to terrify listeners once again with the West Lothian question. Across the nation, heads fell spilling into comfakes as he incanted, "How can it be fair for a Scottish MP..." For once, the interviewer hit him with what we might call the South Armagh question. Sue MacGregor asked him to explain "the anomaly of a Government proposing eventually a devolved legislature in Northern Ireland... but that would save the Union, when it also says that a Scottish parliament would destroy the Union?"

Mr Dorrell's reply was as follows: "I don't really believe there are very many people who live in the United Kingdom who would dissent from the proposition that, for a whole series of reasons of which we are painfully familiar, frankly in the position in Northern Ireland is different from the position in the rest of the United Kingdom." End of answer.

I am told that politicians now regard the "dumbing" of Britain as a clever election tactic. Dumbing is in full swing. The Prime Minister wants to make the constitution an election-winner. The issue barely features on most English election scanners. In Scotland, Wales

and London, opinion is strongly (albeit variably) in favour of what Mr Major opposes, elected assemblies. I cannot see Tory votes here. Dumbness seems to be afflicting all associated with this campaign. Mr Dorrell was yesterday mysteriously sacked.

Now turn to the equally gripping question of tax-raising powers for a Scottish assembly. Mr Forsyth rightly points out that Labour wants the assembly to vary income tax by up to one penny in the pound. He rightly gives warning that the huge subsidies going to Scotland at present might cease under the devolution. He also says that Scotland

might lose its present surplus of MPs, some 20 more than its fair share, awarded long ago to appease its rural population and absence of home rule.

To me these are all powerful arguments for devolution, not against. Let Scotland pay for its own public services. Devolved government can be costly, inconvenient, whimsical and bureaucratic. Democracy often is. Brussels thinks the same of Mr Major's tax-raising assembly at Westminster. What is indefensible is for Mr Forsyth to set out his little shop of horrors but deny customers the right to buy from it. He offers the Scots no assembly, no referendum, no choice, no vote. Like Mr Dorrell he treats them as dumb.

We might recall that John Major enjoyed tax-raising powers as a local councillor in uncapped Lambeth in the 1970s. The great cities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland built their public services on tax-raising powers, without threatening the Union. Tax-raising powers are possessed even by parish councils in England, to the tune of a penny rate. Scotland is a country the size of Denmark, more populous than New Zealand, yet the Cabinet dare not grant it the liberties of an English parish or an

Simon Jenkins

pay for their wine by the glass. These members range from Sir Peregrine Worsthorne and Patrick Leigh-Fermor to Cabinet ministers such as Sir Patrick Mayhew and William Waldegrave.

In the past, members have paid a flat fee for food, and then drunk as much club claret as they might wish. Any change goes down badly in a place where they measure time by the number of hairs in members' nostrils. "Paying by the glass" means one regular. "It's like some cheap Italian restaurant."

"We need to make a bit of a profit," explained the club steward, "so we had to make the change. It is not as if the members have been taking too much advantage of the drink on offer." Perish the thought.

Astounding

MOMENTS before the high-spenders of the Tory party reached for their wallets to bid ridiculous sums at the fundraising auction of the Tory Winter Ball on Monday, John Major provided his answer to a political conundrum.

Why does Gordon Brown's jaw open like a guppy fish and remain that way after every utterance? In his speech to the faithful, Major suggested that such a man could never be trusted with the economy.



he fired the barrel-shaped Peter MacKay as Editor of *Punch*; yesterday he accepted the resignation of John Dux, chief executive of his Liberty Publishing empire. There was no acrimony this time, insists Liberty's chairman Stewart Steven. But Dux and two other colleagues who left with him had no work to do. "He came here to build the publishing empire and purchase media properties," he said. "It has become clear that over the next six months the whole sector is drying up on us. It's a semi-setback, that's all."

Low stakes

THERE are rumblings at the Beefsteak Club, the high game and higher Tory establishment above the tourist tat shops around Leicester Square. Economic necessity means that members must now

the sinister cool of the arch-gambler, told them that serious injury had been avoided.

● The Duchess of York's economy drive seems to know no bounds. On a recent flight from LA, passengers in the first-class cabin noted how she turned down the complimentary pyjamas. Instead, come bedtime, the duchess disappeared into the lavatory and reappeared wearing a tatty old skirt and a woolly gardening jumper. "She looked like a bag lady," recalls a fellow traveller.

Old loyalist

RED DAVE NELLIST was standing outside Labour HQ in London the other day trying to sell copies of the new newspaper from the relaunched Socialist Party, formerly Millant. He was being shown new Labour's sharp shoulder until a familiar figure rolled into view and became the first-ever buyer of the paper. It was none other than John Prescott, new Labour's old Labour deputy leader.

Dux out

MOHAMED AL FAYED'S venture into publishing from his Knightsbridge show has not been a resounding success. Late last year,

Snap election

AT THE launch of his Referendum Party candidacy in Folkestone and Hythe, John Aspinall, the casino owner and close friend of Jimmy Goldsmith, made a foolhardy decision to show off a fishing cat called Loei from his Port Lympne Zoo.

As Aspinall expounded his plan to defeat Michael Howard, the Home Secretary and sitting MP, Loei was tended by a keeper from the zoo, Neville Buck, who stroked it tenderly. Loei just purred.

But as soon as the journalists

started asking questions and photographers popped their flashguns, the beast in Loei came to the fore. The cat started to crawl up the keeper's neck and sank its teeth into his nose.

Aspinall, 70, whose animals have in the past attacked their keepers rather too successfully, looked on smiling as the poor man cried out, tried to pull the cat off and then had to leave the room still tugging. Our Referendum Party candidate finished addressing his audience, and then, with



Play with the animals, John, but not in front of the press

Are you one of Mr Blair's?

Sue Cameron on Labour's plans for the Whitehall force

Labour's plans for revamping the Whitehall machine if it wins the election are reaching a crucial stage. Now, with only weeks to go before polling day, Shadow Cabinet members are jockeying for position, and Britain's top civil servants are anxiously watching for every puff of smoke that emerges from Blair's inner circle.

Tony Blair and those close to him are considering which of our most influential public servants should be promoted to the pinnacle of power if Labour comes to office. They are also looking at ways of reorganising some departmental fiefdoms as a way of exerting control over Whitehall and the Cabinet. Mr Blair will apply the Thatcherite "one of us" principle to Cabinet ministers — so rigorously that some civil servants will face the unenviable prospect of new ministers coming into office with a sentence of political death hanging over them.

But changes to the government machine could be used to enforce discipline on freethinking or overweening ministers and to reinvigorate the Civil Service. They would also help to solve the lingering problem of what to do with Labour's deputy leader, John Prescott.

The one man who seems certain to keep his job under a Labour government is Sir Robin Butler, the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service — though only for the six months before he is due to retire.

Richard Mottram, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, was previously thought to be one of the front-runners to become Cabinet Secretary, but senior Labour people now apparently feel that he may be too closely associated with Michael Heseltine, to whom he was private secretary during the Westland affair. He helped to draft Mr Heseltine's resignation speech in 1986.

Andrew Turnbull, the Permanent Secretary at the Department of the Environment, and Sir Richard Wilson, the top civil servant at the Home Office, are both still in the frame to succeed Sir Robin, but they may face stiff competition from Sir John Kerr. Sir John, Britain's Ambassador to Washington, is returning to London to become Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, but some in the Labour Party would like to see him rise even higher.

Labour has long been expected to separate the jobs of Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service. What is only now emerging is that Labour would like to combine the job of head of the Civil Service with that of Permanent Secretary at the Office of Public Service. The aim would be twofold: to enlist the aid of the Civil Service in managing change in the public services, and to avoid creating a powerful Civil Service Department of the kind that Margaret Thatcher eventually abolished because it was too independent.

The manoeuvrings in the Shadow Cabinet itself may also be harbingers for Whitehall. John Prescott is busily trying to negotiate a job for himself against the day of victory. Meanwhile, the Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is known to have aspired to "superministry" status for the Treasury, so that he might oversee long-term economic and social renewal plans elsewhere in Whitehall.

However, enforcing central control on Whitehall by means of "superministries" seems to be losing ground, with some Labour insiders giving warning that this would be a recipe for jealousy and territorial war. More acceptable would be a policy of slicing up big departments into smaller, more manageable ones. This would mean more permanent secretariats for top civil servants. It would also help Mr Blair to put his mark not just on Whitehall, but on his Cabinet.

He would have little room for manoeuvre in appointing his first Cabinet, because party rules insist that the Shadow Cabinet, elected by Labour MPs, must be kept on after an election victory. But once ensconced in No 10, a Labour Prime Minister is free to shuffle his Cabinet as he pleases, after the first few months. Refashioning departments and ministerial rankings would give opportunities to exercise short-term control.

Finding a role for Mr Prescott will be the worst headache. He expects to be Deputy Prime Minister if Labour wins, but he is also insisting on a departmental job to give him an anchor in Whitehall. He would like a big economic department, but the idea is not popular with Messrs Blair and Brown. Splitting education from employment would be one solution. Giving Mr Prescott the employment side and some responsibility for regional policy would allow him some clout, but not too much. Education is to be the centrepiece of a Blair government, so it would not lose status if separated from employment.

A significant change is also likely at Environment, which is second only to Social Security in Whitehall's spending league. Mr Blair and Mr Brown may not relish the thought of any single minister being in charge of so much of the budget. One answer might be to split the department into its components of housing, local government and green issues. Green matters could perhaps be put together with Transport — which, a ramp department after so much privatisation.

Labour has not set any of its plans in concrete, and may yet be denied the chance to rearrange Whitehall at all. But if it does, senior civil servants may find themselves with a government machine far more centralised than ever before.



Jossie Neill Stroud

"He is a man whose jaw drops at the end of every sentence," he said. "It does that because he can't believe what he is saying."

● The feminist publisher Virago, renowned for its meagre advances, has loosened its purse strings for an unknown 23-year-old, Nell Stroud, an Oxford graduate who ran away to join the circus, has received a £45,000 advance for an account of her travels entitled *Jossie Neill Stroud: a circus parlance for "outsider"*.

P.H.S



DUMBBING DOWN

Mrs Shephard's exam reform is a comprehensive failure

It is in their embrace of selection and their desire to extend it that the Conservatives show themselves unambiguously in advance of Labour in the pursuit of educational excellence. It is all the odder then, that the party which can tarnish Labour as the friend of the failed comprehensive system should seek to "comprehensivise" examinations. Gillian Shephard's proposals yesterday will make an unhappy memorial for an under-achieving minister. For all her protestations that she is injecting "rigour" into the system, the Education Secretary is engaged in dumbing-down the A level.

Mrs Shephard is treading the same path paved with good intentions which led the late Lord Joseph astray. He was responsible for replacing one perfectly good exam, the O level, with an inferior, the GCSE. His aim was admirable, as admirable as the aspirations of the pioneers of comprehensive schools — to broaden access to achievement. The consequence of moving to GCSEs is proving, in practice, almost as unhappy as the flight from excellence signalled by the embrace of comprehensives. The GCSE does not stretch the able as the old O level did, and it is still unsuitable for the academically weak. One size does not fit all.

Having disposed of the O level the Tories now seem intent on undermining the A level. Splitting the sixth-form, with pupils attempting AS levels after one year, and then A levels in their second, is intended to swell numbers staying on. It will, inevitably, mean the entry point for AS levels will be less rigorous than it was for A levels.

It is particularly damaging for the able pupil. The first year will be spent doing work at a level less testing than before, and instead of two years to accustom herself to suitable study as a preparation for higher education, there will be only one. It is no better for the weaker brethren. They will be receiving a certificate whose value will decrease as the ease with which it can be taken becomes apparent.

One of the most effective ways in which

Mrs Shephard could have shown herself a genuine friend of standards is by abolishing the "modular" A level. By allowing retakes and permitting academic hand-holding the modular exam is the antithesis of the "effort, earnestness and excellence" in education which Frances Lawrence called for and Gillian Shephard applauded. Since their introduction three years ago, the proportion of candidates taking modular A levels has risen steadily to 15 per cent and shows no sign of abatement. Mrs Shephard hopes to reverse the tide by reducing the number of resits per module to one and disallowing resits of the final module. This is policy perestroika from the Gorbachev of the educational establishment, tinkering with a mechanism that is irredeemably flawed.

Mrs Shephard might, at the very least, have reserved the modular approach for AS levels and kept the A level an appropriately stringent examination. If she has neither the time, nor will, to move away from modules altogether she should have ensured that the A level's quality was not strained.

Of the Government's other announcements yesterday, there is little cause for cheer. The plan to develop a Key Skills qualification to assure employers and universities that school-leavers can read, add up and switch on a computer is a sad indictment of the failure of the system overall. The demand for the qualification reflects the poor attainment in basic literacy and numeracy of too many school leavers.

Mr Major's own plan for a "National Target" is dangerously dirigiste. He should have known better than to associate himself with the aggrandising ambitions of the Department for Education and Employment. In education, as in economics, the answer to underperformance is not national targets and the masking of failure with a redefinition downwards of success. Standards will only improve through competition and choice. Mr Major knows that. It is a pity he chooses to hide behind his Education Secretary's skirts.

THE RIGHT TRACK

Privatisation has made the trains run on time

With the award yesterday of the franchise for Regional Railways Central, the Government has now completed the sale of the 25 train operating units formed from the break-up of British Rail. By the time of the election, the running of all trains on Britain's 11,000-mile network will be in private hands, and railway privatisation — the most complicated, protracted and contentious of all state sell-offs — will be complete.

The exercise has been a greater success than even the Government had hoped, and its advocates can take credit for keeping their nerve and vision. An avalanche of early criticism, blunders and bureaucratic ineptitude threatened a PR and operational disaster. But despite warnings of business indifference and a fracturing of the network, the franchising operation has attracted enthusiastic interest from well-qualified bidders, has resulted in a good mix of operators and has begun to yield the improvements that are changing public perception. Opra — the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising — has done a good job.

A new generation of entrepreneurs is delivering better, faster and cheaper journeys. Passenger numbers have risen 6 per cent in a year, complaints are down 30 per cent and a new mood of optimism is seeping through the industry. Punctuality has improved, as the performance regime, allocating blame for delay and imposing penalty charges, has sharpened the commercial instinct. Trains are cleaner, staff more committed and passengers able to enjoy the attention taken for granted in the air. The award of the biggest and most run-down franchise, the West Coast Main Line, to Richard Branson is particularly welcome.

an entrepreneur with a proven marketing flair now has the chance not only to invest the huge sums needed to upgrade the iron backbone linking Britain's main cities but also to do much, by example, to revive the image and fortunes of rail travel.

Kenneth Clarke has seized on this and other privatisations to show how the policy has created a virtuous circle. In a speech last night he cited a report by the Centre for Policy Studies showing that an average of £300 million was paid out each year to eight big nationalised industries from 1979 to 1982; since 1987 the Exchequer has received an average of £2.8 billion a year from these privatised industries — less than half from the proceeds of their sale — and prices to the consumer have fallen. He spoke of a new culture of customer service, price competition and increasingly tight price-cap formulae imposed by regulators.

Rail has not yet delivered all these benefits. Subsidies will continue for years, though falling at an impressive rate. Other issues still need urgently to be tackled. Railtrack, dominated by a cautious public sector mentality, has failed to spend its investment targets, and needs to take bigger risks in price flexibility. Through ticketing, unpopular with the rail companies, is still difficult and reliable information to passengers on timetables, routes and competitive fares almost impossible to obtain. Freight has yet to be given the priority it demands to compete with the advent in the next two years of 44-tonne lorries. And unions are still a brake on the through trains to better service. But the route to private initiative is now open: it is up to the new rail companies to crack on down the line.

HEY, BIG SPENDERS

Tory ball-goers dance to the step of supply and demand

It is traditional to hold an auction for party funds at the Conservatives' Winter Ball. But for a signed copy of a slightly used book to sell at £170,000 is not true. It was a book by the Prime Minister's wife about Chequers. True too, the entire cabinet had also placed their names upon the fly-leaf. But £170,000? For such a sum the purchaser could have had a first edition of Newton's *Principia* of 1687, or an edition of Aristotle in five volumes, 1495-98, printed by the great Aldus himself in Venice.

The auction prices this year would have brought a smile to the face of a Sotheby's expert, even if he suspected he was being filmed at his expertise by a covert camera. A large painting entitled *The Fleet in Sight* by Stanhope Forbes fetched £300,000, a record for that artist and the price of a middling Renoir or Turner. Forbes was a fine and long-lived RA of the Newlyn school whose canvases are famously large and watery. This particular painting was unusual for focussing on the crowd looking out to sea rather than at the fleet. But £300,000?

If the Tory party loses the coming election it will not be for lack of enthusiasm at dinner and dance. The Prime Minister's preface to the programme encouraged bidders to take out their wallets and shake them with abandon. Its blunt point was that "victory in the marginal seats is vital if we are to enter a fifth term of office". This may not summon

up the spirit as rousing as Henry V before Harfleur. But it certainly did the trick.

There was, of course, some help from Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, an auctioneer who needs no chandelier bids to sell his books. This salesman could sell underarm deodorant to the Venus de Milo. At the end of the auction he did indeed sell the two gavel with which he conducted it for £27,000. Even a copy of *No 10 Downing Street — The Story of a Home*, signed by Alec Douglas-Home, Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, raised £54,000. A new law has been added to the old laws of the market: caveat emptor and gaudet party treasurer.

Those reckless with language might describe such prices as obscene. Cynics might suspect panic at losing the election or even (never let it be said) the last minute desire for honours. But, as good Conservatives know, the market is the fairest way to determine prices. On the night, in the company, those were the prices these objects fetched. Those who object should avoid auctions. And if they found themselves at this one by accident or pleasant invitation, they could always sit still, nowhere near the chandelier, and listen to the song that summed up the evening, sung by the inimitable Shirley Bassey in a costume that could not have smuggled even an Old Miniature past the customs: *Hey, Big Spender*.

Cautious voices on Nato expansion

From Sir Patrick Duffy, Deputy Chairman of the Atlantic Council of the United Kingdom, and Mr Alan Lee Williams, Director

Sir, The Atlantic Council has been active in promoting public discussion of Nato enlargement, and is now agreed on expansion, provided that it is on realistic terms and does not antagonise the Russians. We agree, however, with your leading article (February 7) that when such a distinguished figure as the former diplomat George Kennan describes Nato expansion as a "fateful error" we should listen.

It is vital that we should address Russia's concern that Nato expansion to include Central and Eastern European countries that were formerly satellites of the Soviet empire would be a threat to Russian interests. The prospects are not unfavourable. Nato has pledged not to station nuclear forces in the new member states, and wants to involve Russia more closely in European security. Russian participation in the Bosnian peace force is regarded as the model for a future East-West military partnership.

Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, remains hostile but has been in dialogue with Javier Solana, Secretary-General of Nato, who promises that no avenues for agreement should be left unexplored. These presumably would include not only successful Nato initiatives such as the Bosnia peace force and Partnership for Peace, but also early talks on CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) and Start-3. They could also include political co-operation with Western Europe, and economic relations with the IMF, the Paris Club of leading industrial country creditors and the World Bank.

The latest proposal, according to your report today, is to persuade Russia to join a "Nato Russia Council", which would hold its inaugural meeting at the *Nato summit* in Madrid in July. The crucial question is whether Russia will be given equal partnership on such a council and whether, if it is given a vote, that vote could be used to meet its legitimate concerns without fatally compromising Nato.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK DUFFY,
Deputy Chairman,
ALAN LEE WILLIAMS,
Director,
Atlantic Council of the
United Kingdom,
8A Lower Grosvenor Place, SW1,
February 10.

From the Director of the
British American Security
Information Council

Sir, Your leader is right to call for a full debate on Nato expansion. The US Congress has requested President Clinton to produce a cost-benefit analysis of expansion before it authorises the necessary funds.

The British Government should do the same. The public ought to know the risks and benefits of expansion and how much they will have to pay to subsidise the military in Central and Eastern Europe. It is surprising that both the Conservative and Labour leaderships are committed to Nato's expansion when it is clear at Westminster that backbench opinion, in both parties, is deeply sceptical.

Yours sincerely,
DANIEL T. PLESCH,
Director, British American
Security Information Council,
Carrara House,
20 Embankment Place, WC2,
February 7.

From the London Bureau Chief
of RIA-Novosti

Sir, How right of George Kennan and your leading article to draw attention to the risks of Western leaders' Nato expansion plans.

Now that Russia, by nearly all admissions, is making big strides on the road to democracy and a market economy, the argument that it is supposedly more dangerous to Nato than were the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact sounds strange in the least. Should President Clinton and Congress still be taking their cue from such proponents of the 1970s Cold War era as Zbigniew Brzezinski and the "Michigan Polish" lobby? If the position of Russia's chief enemies of the West is strengthened inside Russia, we could see a precipitation of a revision of Russian foreign policy in general and a new division line in Europe.

Pursuit of Nato's eastward expansion could be, as Presidential Chief of Staff Anatoli Chubais pointed out at the Davos economic forum last week, the "biggest mistake in Western foreign policy for 50 years".

Yours faithfully,
ANDREI OLEININ,
London Bureau Chief,
Russian Information Agency —
Novosti,
3 Rosary Gardens, SW7,
February 10.

Back to the future

From Mrs S. Griffith

Sir, On the old route of the AS near Oswestry, now bypassed, there is a single-storey house with a particularly large sitting-room. It is "The Old Little Chief" (letter, February 8).

Yours faithfully,
SUE GRIFFITH,
Foxhall, Penllan, Denbigh, Clwyd,
February 8.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Pay-freeze plan raises temperatures

From Professor Frank Wallace, FENG

Sir, I wish to take issue with Lord Rees-Mogg's forcefully argued article ("Mr Brown's big freeze", February 6) in which he inveighs against the folly of attempting to interfere with the operation of the free labour market.

It is surely disingenuous to argue that unless we pay our top civil servants, judges, generals and ministers salaries comparable with those of top directors in industry, not to mention fund managers (of whom we have heard so much lately, not all of it flattering), their professions will be left the poorer (letters, February 6, 7, 11).

What this argument largely ignores is the distinction between the private sector, in which no holds are barred, and the public sector which, until not so long ago, was regarded as a career offering ample fulfilment to able men and women, bringing them far greater than purely monetary rewards.

There are surely many who, after the well recognised excesses of the unbridled free market, which have led to ever-growing inequalities between rich and poor and to the neglect of much of our national infrastructure, doubt whether the unchecked operation of market forces can bring about a fair and just society. In my view, that should remain one of our abiding objectives.

Yours faithfully,
F. J. WALLACE,
Cedarwood Cottage,
22 Sion Road, Bath,
February 7.

From Mr David J. Savage

Sir, There seems to be no shortage of applicants for any judicial appointment. As the laws of supply and demand (market forces) appear to be operating so well, what justification is there for the Government to increase judicial salaries?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID J. SAVAGE,
Foster Savage & Gordon (solicitors),
269 Farnborough Road,
Farnborough, Hampshire.

From Mr T. A. Backhouse

Sir, Sir John Acland, in his letter (February 7) about the pay freeze for senior public servants, goes into raptures about the benefits of the example which they set to those who do not qualify for this dubious privilege.

Am I being stupid in failing to understand what exactly it is that those who are compulsorily denied some-

thing, which an independent body has decided they deserve, are supposed to exemplify?

Yours faithfully,
T. A. BACKHOUSE,
St Margaret's Cottage,
Polgooth, Cornwall,
February 7.

From Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC

Sir, Instead of seeking to deny judges the prompt payment of the modest increase in their salaries recommended by the independent review body, Gordon Brown (reports and leading article, February 7) should increase the rate of income tax that senior lawyers and other top earners pay.

Those who have abandoned lucrative careers to give dedicated public service should not be used as political scapegoats; otherwise the quality of public service, on which we all depend, will surely suffer.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY LESTER,
House of Lords,
February 7.

From Sir Frederick Lawton

Sir, If Gordon Brown, on becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer after April 1997, sought to rescind the second part of any order made before the next election by the present Lord Chancellor for implementing the recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body for judges' salaries he would be likely to involve a new Labour government in a grave constitutional dispute.

From 1701, when the Act of Settlement was passed, until 1973 Parliament alone decided what judicial salaries should be. It only used its power to do so on four occasions: 1825, 1832, 1954 and 1965. By the Administration of Justice Act 1973 Parliament decided that the salaries of Supreme Court judges could be raised, but not lowered, by Order made by the Lord Chancellor. Such Orders, if the correct parliamentary procedure is followed, have the force of law.

If Gordon Brown purported to rescind part of any Order made by the present Lord Chancellor, seemingly he would be trying to suspend an existing law. The Bill of Rights 1689 forbids the executive to do anything of the kind.

Yours truly,
FREDERICK LAWTON,
1 The Village, Skelton, Yorkshire,
February 11.

Labour's policy on school selection

From the Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Employment

Sir, Your leading article, "Grammar report" (February 8), implies, quite wrongly, that my restatement of our position on grammar school ballots is a new position for the Wirral South by-election.

Your guide to the issues in the general election (January 20) described Labour's policy thus:

The 161 existing grammar schools would be turned into comprehensive only if enough local parents signed a petition and then voted against selection.

This was also the position in our paper *Diversity and Excellence*, launched on June 22, 1995, which I set out in an article in *The Times* that day. Had you checked your own files, you could have avoided the suggestion that this is a cynical change of policy.

Cynicism towards politics and politicians after the last 18 years is understandable; but it doesn't help our democracy to reinforce it when such cynicism is not borne out by the facts.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID BLUNKETT,
House of Commons,
February 10.

Latchkey children

From Dr David Walter

Sir, Whilst working in Singapore in 1990 I watched Lee Kuan Yew speak to Singaporeans on television about their achievements in the 25 years since independence. The Government had become aware that many more women were working, and that children were not being cared for so well (letters, February 7) after finishing school for the day.

He suggested that perhaps children would be better cared for if they could stay on at school to do their homework

From Mr George Walden,
MP for Buckingham (Conservative)

Sir, Tessa Blackstone ("Places, not vouchers, for under-fives", February 7) quotes me in support of Labour on the Assisted Places Scheme. The argument in my book, *We Should Know Better*, is that to do away with the scheme without putting anything in its place would make private schools even more exclusive than they are.

My solution — opening them up to the talents on a voluntary basis — is supported by many independent schools but opposed by Labour, because it inevitably involves selection. Listening to the selectively educated voices of Labour spokesmen raising egalitarianism is reminiscent of the old Soviet *nomenklatura* prating about peace, or the historical primacy of the proletariat.

Now Mr Blunkett is ready to countenance selection in grammar schools, do Labour objections to opening up private schools fall away? What is Baroness Blackstone's position?

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE WALDEN,
House of Commons,
February 10.

until a parent returned home. The Government would try the scheme in four schools on the island and, if the public liked it, they would implement it throughout the island. They did and it is.

This is just one example of a mature discussion between government and people to solve everyday problems. Contrast it with the pathetic "marketing" approach we are fed, and notice our demoralised, badly educated kids sleeping on the streets.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID WALTER,
136 Conway Road, Southgate, N14.

Spain and Gibraltar

From the Ambassador of Spain

Sir, The article "Madrid misreads the Rock" (January 30) says that "Spain will never be truly democratic" until it recognises that the Gibraltarians have a right to self-determination (see also leading article, February 3; letters February 1, 5).

I do not expect anybody seriously to think that the United Kingdom has ceased to be truly democratic because it has not allowed the approximately six million citizens of Hong Kong to express freely and democratically their wishes concerning their future. Our respect for the interests of the approximately 18,440 Gibraltarian voters is not incompatible with re-establishing the territorial integrity of my country, which is our aim in this matter.

We believe that the avenue for ref-

lection which has been opened by the Spanish Foreign Minister Abel Matutes deserves to be pursued in depth; it is serious, constructive and endeavours to take into account the concerns of the Gibraltarians.

On the other hand, it opens up a path that will lead in the future to the safeguard of the security, stability and prosperity of the inhabitants of the colony as well as their present individual and collective status.

Yours sincerely,
ALBERTO AZA,
Spanish Embassy,
24 Belgrave Square, SW1,
February 6.

Letters that are intended for publication should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046.

Reasons to sell off Marconi archive

From Sir Geoffrey Pattie,
Chairman of GEC-Marconi

Sir, It is important to put our intention to offer the Marconi archive for sale at auction (letters, February 5 and 10) into its proper context.

In our preparations for the UK Marconi centenary, celebrating Guglielmo Marconi's first experiments and patent in this country, we decided in 1995 that it would be responsible to carry out an audit of the little-known, rarely used and inaccessible archive at Great Baddow, Essex, adjacent to our research centre.

We brought in expert opinion and hired our own consultant. Such was the extent and the condition of the contents that what had been estimated to take two working weeks took some five months.

Our greatest concern was for the ephemera, mostly paper-based, which were deteriorating and continue to do so. Ideally, such material should be kept in a perfect micro-controlled environment and part of the dilemma was that purpose-built archives would cost £11 million — far more than the value of the archive.

We are not alone in this dilemma: museums, archives, institutions and corporations worldwide are unable to keep such treasures, let alone display them, because of these prohibitive costs.

A range of possible solutions was examined, and I am confident that we have made a proper decision. Last week I announced that the majority of the archive would be offered for sale. Certain unique items would be retained by the company and some items will remain on long-term loan to, eg, the Science Museum, subject to satisfactory safekeeping agreements.

A CD-ROM interactive disk is being produced which will take the Marconi story to schools, universities, libraries, academic and professional institutions and, thereby, to mankind — a high-tech solution of which Marconi would surely have approved.

These decisions complement perfectly the Marconi Days which we have initiated to motivate the teachers of, typically, 11 to 14-year-olds in electronics. This scheme, which has been endorsed by academics, parliamentarians and industry alike, will guide some 1,000 teachers through Marconi Days every year as an integral part of their national, formal, established programmes of training and development.

An independent trust fund will be established and the programme will be administered by the Institution of Electrical Engineers. We believe that if British high-technology industry is to continue to be a force in world markets, then such programmes are vital for our future.

Meanwhile, the question of keeping the archive together — one of our original considerations — has been raised publicly. We are in discussions with certain interested parties and we shall be more delighted than anybody if this can be achieved.

Yours sincerely,
GEOFFREY PATTIE,
Chairman,
GEC-Marconi Limited,
The Grove, Warren Lane,
Stammore, Middlesex,
February 10.

From Mr Bernard Kaukas

Sir, Mr Gavin Littaur's enthusiasm (letter, February 10) for the dispersal of the Marconi archive is misguided. If one were talking about a library, he would not be misguided; indeed many collectors in this field are generous enough to make deliberate provision in their wills for their collections to be dispersed after they have gone, in order to give other collectors the chance to acquire items which, if the library had been willed elsewhere in toto, as it were, would have been forever out of their reach, let alone their grasp.

However, having off a collection embodying the embryos of the greatest innovation of the century merely for the sake of a little filthy lucre is another matter — particularly in the case of a man who initiated its wonder in this country, rather than in his own. Can we now imagine a future when the Royal Institution is privatised and the cost of the renovation of the roof covering and the provision of a hospitality suite for visiting foreigners means that Faraday's endearingly fatty coils and Davy's miners' lamps find their way to the auction rooms, on their way to the Smithsonian?

No, Mr Littaur, it will not do. Mrs Bottomley, come to the nation's aid and earmark a whopping great proportion of the lottery proceeds to prevent the dispersal of our unique scientific heritage.

Yours faithfully,
BERNARD KAUKAS,
Savage Club,
1 Whitehall Place, SW1,
February 10.

From Mr Ian Jessiman

Sir, In your report of February 10 you mentioned that Sir William Preece supported Marconi's pioneering work in radio. Is this the same Sir William Preece, Chief Engineer of the Post Office, who in 1876 said: "The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys?"

Yours sincerely,
IAN JESSIMAN,
24 Roundhill Way,
Loughborough, Leicestershire,
February 10.

Too much body Wax is bad for women

Its, bums and a few stretch marks in between: why does Ruby Wax waste her wit on reducing women to their reproductive components? A really sharp comic in the Jewish-American tradition, with an original and merry talent for confounding scepticism to the camera, she spoils it all with a loathing of her body, constantly bating its bits that are bigger, smaller or saggier than some other female's.

And why does the BBC let her? The new Beeb theme and again fails to recognise the fine line between rejuvenation and dumbing-down. The vulgar self-indulgence allowed Ruby Wax Meets... on BBC1 on Monday nights bodes ill for the coming rethink of its news.

Why should our licence fee, etc. etc? All the scorn lavished on the BBC's cossetting of Chris Evans ought to be poured on it for Ms Wax instead. At the start of Wax's programme, the actress Helen Mirren

looked like being intelligent and defiantly unglamorous enough to avoid the traps into which Wax so deftly led the vain Imelda Marcos and the cash-starved Duchess of York.

But no. By the end, the unmarried, middle-aged Mirren was wondering aloud why men fall for silicone breasts. She was enticed into shopping for a clockwork doll. "She's gone all maternal," said Wax (mother of three) triumphantly.

In the interview that followed, the beautiful Julianna Margulies of ER, in answer to the question "Do you find yourself, like, now that you're successful, becoming an asshole?" volunteered that she still folded her own knickers. Wax had to go one better. Her producer folds her panties, she said. Thereupon this gentleman, Clive Tulloh, included in the shot (another of the show's indulgences: the week before he helped Wax to simulate a gymnastic sexual position upside down against a tree), joked that he sniffs the panties, too.

It is not often I think of Lord Reith, but I did then.

I write as a fan. Ruby Wax is so good that she really ought to try harder. An advance look at next week's interview with Bill Cosby (done before his recent personal tragedy) reminded me how much better she is without that ghastly "sisters shopping together" approach. She allows Cosby to render her almost speechless while he reveals himself as prickly, humourless and self-important.

Then, with some outrageous bad-taste questions, she exposes the simmering tension between America's Jews and blacks that is even now making the news. And she does not even have to mention body parts. Cosby volunteers that he is not circumcised.

Wax's success with the BBC is forcing me

to abandon a cherished theory — that Joan Rivers, another American funny woman, bombed in Britain because she holds the Hollywood belief that a physical flaw is a moral flaw. So Barbara Bush's chin droops: where's the big laugh? But Wax is making her way by purveying this assumption that all females are locked in out-and-out anatomical competition and will do anything to improve what cruel nature has given them.

Her programmes with Baywatch's Pamela Anderson were the pits. Not content with comparing the hairlessness of her bikini region with the beach beauty's, on the second interview, on February 3, she even trotted out her own baby to hold up beside Anderson's. How low, as the tabloids say of Fergie, can you go?

The Wax approach is unfair to women. The British media are obsessed with female organs as never before. They should not be encouraged: flatter stomachs —

how to get them; wombs, full, empty and for rent: Wonderbras, pro and con. The late American Ambassador to France is obituarised in terms of her crotch. The thought that the sex that grows babies can do something else as well occupies more print and screen space than the Middle East. Were the long-awaited creature from Mars to arrive, it would think that females on this planet are freaks.

The fall from media grace of Nicola "Superwoman" Hollick is not, as some argue, a sign of an anti-feminist campaign to put women back in the home and keep them there. Nor, for all its shoddiness, was Panorama's "Missing Mum". The misogyny now on display is older than feminism. It's Golden Bough stuff. Makes feel shut out of this marvellous trick that female bodies can perform. Their resentment is only increased by the way in which some women go on and on about it.

So, Ruby Wax, belt up down there. Imelda Marcos's shoes are a better subject for you than Pamela Anderson's behind. Pretending that shopping reveals the inner woman is as bad as cooking the books to prove that working mothers are bad for children. These stunts serve to keep female the freakish sex: a long way from equality.

Zoe Heller, a columnist in The Sunday Times, is another witty woman who has turned the spotlight on her ageing womb. Every week she reports on her search for the man who will give her a baby. She was quite right to walk out on the Californian boyfriend who refused on the ground that he has done the parenthood thing already. I hope Zoe gets her wish — but not if we have to read all about it.



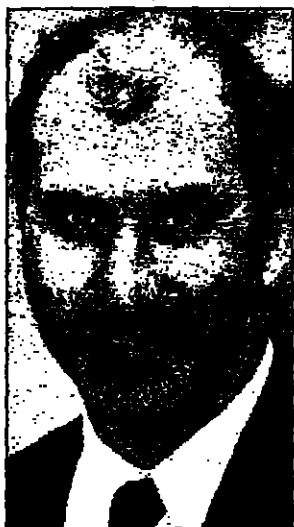
BRENDA MADDOX

Portillo's Chinese whispers

INTERNAL party politics will jostle with defence matters for Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, when he visits Hong Kong next week. Special defence writers have been ordered off his trip and editorial writers and political writers invited instead.

Critics claim that this means only one thing. Portillo wants this last visit from a British Defence Secretary to the colony before it reverts to Chinese control to advance his own cause within the Conservative Party.

In using foreign trips to pursue his own leadership claims, he is hardly alone. When Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, visited Russia last month to discuss crime, he invited home-affairs specialists. Then he decided political editors were more the thing. When they were unforthcoming, his dithering left him with only a feature writer from The Mail on Sunday to chronicle his Nixonian trip. There is retribution for such naked politicking. Nothing has been written about his trip.



Yentob: where was he?

Busy elsewhere?

ANOTHER coup for the media world's least punctual man, Alan Yentob, the BBC's director of programmes, was to have joined Michael Parkinson, Verity Lambert and Lynda La Plante on stage during a ceremony at the National Film Theatre on the South Bank last Thursday, where the British Film Institute was awarding its first fellowships to people in the television industry.

Parky, Lambert and La Plante were suitably humbled and appreciative of the honour, but Yentob was nowhere

to be seen. He eventually turned up 40 minutes late.

Perhaps he was too busy filling in his job application for Channel 4.

Making mischief

GIVING evidence last week to the Heritage Select Committee's inquiry into the BBC and the future of broadcasting, David Elstein, chief executive of Channel 5, dropped what appeared to be a bombshell.

"One of the things the BBC is considering on its subscription channels," he told MPs, "is offering viewers advance opportunities to see programmes before they are shown on BBC1 and 2. What does that make BBC licence-payers? Second-class citizens."

If true, it would effectively mean that BBC licence fee money would be used to subsidise the corporation's commercial activities, leaving less well-off viewers unable to afford a subscription to the new "premium channel" subsidising those who could.

The BBC issued not one, but two categorical denials. It seems that Mr Elstein was referring to the interactive cable TV pilot project run by BT last year, which used BBC programmes but which is now over. How encouraging it is, nevertheless, to see he has not lost his penchant for mischief-making.



Branagh: Hello! darling

● A certain glossy magazine continues to persuade every corner of our culture, even influencing our great Shakespeareans. In BBC2's forthcoming documentary about the making of his four-hour, uncut screen version of Hamlet, Kenneth Branagh gives his interpretation of the movie: "These people could be stepping out of the pages of a 19th-century Hello! magazine."

Slatting cooks

MANY of Britain's best-known cookery writers come in for a bashing in the March issue of Harper's & Queen. It

lists dishes from books by Marco Pierre White, Anthony Worrall Thompson and even Delia Smith as past their sell-by date. But most conspicuous was the near absence of the magazine's own cookery writer, Nigel Slater. He got the briefest mention in passing but his books were clearly not worth listing. Instead the article picked out works on Australian cookery.

● The decision by the shy and retiring Liam Gallagher and Patsy Kensit to call off their wedding, because they didn't care for their pictures to be taken by photographers, profited one entrepreneur. As rain lashed the press pack that continued to camp outside the couple's house, a waterproof-clothing salesman turned up and made £120 in minutes.



Kensit: shy and retiring

New man from the Pru

THE Man from the Pru, one of advertising's most enduring slogans, is being resurrected in a £20 million multimedia campaign beginning on Friday. The ambitious branding drive marks the long-awaited first work on the Prudential by Abbott Mead Vickers, which landed the account a year ago and has been discussing strategy with the client ever since.

In a variation from the original campaign, which was created in the early 1950s and last seen on our screens 20 years ago, the "man" will this time be Sir Peter Davis, group chief executive of the UK's largest life insurer. A number of press and poster executions have also been planned, featuring other senior Pru managers.

Jim Sutcliffe, chief executive of the Prudential UK, says: "Our customer research has shown that even after all this time the man from the Pru is still

well loved. Quite simply, he refuses to die. The task has been to recreate him fit for the 21st century."

THE SET of Gays and Dolls at the National Theatre is the somewhat surprising venue for one of the biggest advertising events ever to be staged.

Organised by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, the March 18 spectacle, entitled "It pays to advertise," will feature talks and debates on such issues as advertising effectiveness and how advertising works, as well as numerous exhibitions of creativity.

Mark Robinson, the IPA event chairman, says: "We are putting the advertising industry on show in a spectacular way and we hope to attract

about 500 delegates — most conferences are doing well with 150."

KIM BASINGER, the smouldering ex-model film star best known for 9½ Weeks, is tipped to be the star of the next Peugeot 406 advertisement. The new campaign, from the Top 20 agency Euro RSCG Wnek Gosper, is due to break in a month's time, and should bring a new dimension to a notoriously dreary advertising sector.

Meanwhile, the red-coated little girl who starred in the previous 406 ad, a grainy film set to a soundtrack of M People's Search for The Hero, is to appear in a new film with Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise. Madison Edgington will play the couple's daughter in Eyes Wide Shut, being shot in London by Stanley Kubrick.

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You will already have an established network of industry contacts and possess a high level of relationship management skills, enthusiasm, discipline, confidence and persistence to win new business. French or German language skills would be an added bonus. The successful candidates will ideally have had some exposure to the wireless cellular communication environment. Although it is stressed that candidates with technical credibility and an ability to learn Airtech plc's products quickly, will also be considered. Please send your full CV to Charles Green, Senior Consultant, Austin Knight UK Limited, Knightway House, 20 Sals Square, London W1A 1DS. Fax: 0171 439 5744. Please quote reference number A1368.

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If you think you can deliver, please send full career and salary details, quoting the appropriate reference, to: Jim Lowe, Personnel Director, Vaux Breweries Ltd, The Brewery, Sunderland SR1 3AN. Closing date: Friday 21st February 1997.

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If you think you can deliver, please send full career and salary details, quoting the appropriate reference, to: Jim Lowe, Personnel Director, Vaux Breweries Ltd, The Brewery, Sunderland SR1 3AN. Closing date: Friday 21st February 1997.

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Please send CV, stating salary to the attention of Henrietta Royle, CEENET, 24, Throgmorton Street, London EC2N 2AT.

Does this mean the end of the freebie?



After April 1 journalists taking a "hard-working" trip to Mauritius could find themselves receiving a considerable bill from the Inland Revenue when they get back home

The "freebie" is part of journalistic lore. The trip to the Bahamas to test-drive the new Ford Naissau. The week in Hong Kong to acclimatise the writer to the business environment for the Blogs & Co Far Eastern unit trust. The weekend in the La Grande Maison country-house hotel in the heart of the Cotswolds to sample the new range of "Grande Maison" toiletries.

But it is under threat from the taxman. The new "self-assessment" regime which starts on April Fool's Day means that any freebie must be declared to the taxman, not only by the journalist who gets it, but also by either his or her employer or the company that gave the freebie. If it is worth more than £150, and you can't convince the Inland Revenue that it is "wholly and exclusively necessary" for the purposes of writing an article, you will be taxed. If you fail to tell them you can be fined up to £3,000.

Take the case of a technology journalist "lent" a computer to review, which the manufacturer says does not need to be returned once the review is written. The computer firm will have to send the journalist a form saying how much the company



Impending changes to the tax rules could leave many journalists facing painful bills, reports Jason Nissé

thinks the benefit is worth. The journalist would then have to tell the taxman when he files out his tax return. If the review was organised by the paper or magazine he writes for, then his employer would also have to tell the taxman how much financial benefit the journalist received. If it was organised directly with the computer company, then it would have to make the declaration to the taxman.

A bureaucratic nightmare? That is not all. The journalist will have to pay tax on the computer if it is not deemed "wholly and exclusively necessary" for the review. What is "wholly and exclusively necessary"? Well, that is up to the taxman to assess. Anyone who has tried to claim the value of a computer they have actually bought themselves against tax will know how difficult the Inland Revenue can be on this issue. In the past you might

have accepted a Pentium multimedia PC for free, but you won't if you have to pay £500 extra tax because of it.

And will you accept tickets to the Centre Court at Wimbledon from a company? If it has obtained them through a corporate hospitality firm, it is certain that the company will have paid more than £150 per ticket. So you are enjoying Sampras v. Hentman. But your delight at the rejuvenation of British tennis is tempered by the £50 tax bill you have to pay for the pleasure.

Or would you, like a certain Sunday journalist, accept free dresses to wear when you attend glamorous events if that Versace gown brings a £3,000 tax bill with it?

But to see the full force of how crazy this system will be, the accountants KPMG have worked through five different scenarios of a fictional two-week trip to Mauritius.

The first has a writer for the travel pages reviewing holiday options in Mauritius. He and his paper have to declare it but does he have to pay tax? "If you are sent to Mauritius for two weeks, will the Revenue accept that the whole holiday is for business? Not on your nelly," says Leslie Ferrar, a tax partner at KPMG.

The flights and some of the stay will be tax-free, but the taxman will take you for part of the trip and if you take your spouse, the whole of their trip will be on your tax bill.

The second scenario has the Mauritius trip given to a travel journalist after he wrote a piece about holidays in Turkey by the same firm. Unless he also writes a review of Mauritius holidays, the whole trip will be taxed.

The third has a motoring journalist flown to Mauritius to test-drive a new

car. The Revenue will only allow the flight and the time he has spent testing the car to be allowed against tax. So he had better drive it every day to convince the taxman that the trip was necessary.

In the fourth scenario he also tests the car in the UK. Then the taxman is likely to decide that the Mauritius trip was wholly unnecessary and make the journalist pay tax on the lot.

The final one is a trip given by a Mauritius bank to cover a major financial deal. To celebrate, the bank gives away Mont Blanc pens worth £140 each. The taxman will allow the flight, but you will have to pay tax on the rest of the holiday. The pen, though, will not be taxed as it is a separate gift of less than £150.

Confused? You'd better not be because the penalties are going to be stiff. If you do not get it right, the taxman can fine for the entire value of the mistake, plus interest and a surcharge for paying the tax late.

So that free holiday to Mauritius could leave you nursing a £500 tax bill, a £500 fine for failing to declare it, £50 interest and a £200 surcharge for paying the tax late. A freebie costing £1,250? No thank you.

She who must be obeyed

Damian Whitworth sees a power struggle at the Mirror Group

The decision of Amanda Platell this week to walk out of the *Sunday Mirror* where she was acting Editor came as little surprise to many. In the past year the newspaper has seen a faster turnover of editors than pancakes in the nation's trying pans yesterday.

The departure of Platell leaves just one national newspaper, the *Independent on Sunday*, edited by a woman, Rosie Boycott. But the most powerful woman in Fleet Street is still very much in evidence. She is Bridget Rowe, managing director of the *Sunday Mirror* and *The People*, until Monday Platell's immediate boss and also the executive who has presided over the recent extraordinary merry-go-round of editors.

paper ranks has been astonishing and early on she caught hold of the coattails of David Montgomery, MGN's chief executive, when he was at the now defunct *Today*. She was his deputy editor. When he came to the *Mirror* he wanted her on board and hired her as managing director of the *Mirror* Group; she moved to *The Independent* before taking the *Sunday Mirror* hot seat.

Platell decided to resign on Monday after her former sponsor refused to make a decision on whether to remove the "acting" from her title.

"She's been around long enough to be able to handle Bridget Rowe. But without the title of editor she wasn't empowered and it was very hard for her. When you are



Rowe: wants to be in charge



Platell: finally decided to resign

Yesterday she showed what an uncompromising operator she is. When staff arrived to start a new working week they found Rowe had taken the helm. By lunchtime Chris Boffey, the news editor, and Gordon Hay, his deputy, had cleared their desks — along with four others. David Banks, former *Daily Mirror* editor, was taken on as consultant editor of the *Sunday Mirror*.

Rowe, who became managing director of *Mirror* Group's two Sunday titles last year, is at home in the editor's chair. Last year, when she was still editing *The People*, she picked up the Newspaper Focus awards for Sunday Newspaper of the Year and National Newspaper of the Year after 18 consecutive months of circulation rises.

She came originally from women's magazines to *The Sun* and set up *Sunday*, the *News of the World* magazine, before moving to *Mirror* Group Newspapers. She now sits on the Press Complaints Commission's code of practice committee, where she is forceful in putting the case of the mass circulation tabloids.

installed in the job you can tell people to back off," says one friend.

While Platell was neutered, Rowe is understood to have been trying to hire staff for the paper herself and was even briefing reporters on stories.

"There has been a common denominator with all the editors who left the *Sunday Mirror*," says one senior Fleet Street executive. "Rowe wants to be in control."

Rowe has been likened to a female version of Kelvin MacKenzie, the former Editor of *The Sun* who lives in the same Kent village and now runs the *Mirror's* Live TV operation.

However, she has claimed there is a difference. "I tell better jokes," she once declared. Those who departed this week from her working environment might not agree.

The judges of the annual British Press Awards are editors and senior journalists from all the British national newspapers. Even they, however, could not stomach the thought when they met on Monday of making a special award to the "British press" for its reporting of the Dunblane massacre.

Such an award, it was quickly agreed, would seem self-serving and invite mockery. Yet it was not a stupid idea. All the reporting from Dunblane was outstanding.

When tragedies on the scale of Zeebrugge, Hillsborough, IRA bombings or the Dunblane massacre occur, the British press is put to the test. It has often failed and been accused of intrusion into private grief. That was not the case in Dunblane. Reporters are trained to be objective, to stand aside as observers, but they could not but be moved

When crisis strikes the quality shines through

by the distress they met in Dunblane.

Hundreds travelled to Scotland to report the massacre but they eventually decided to withdraw from the town and allow its citizens to mourn in peace. They left the Press Association, Britain's national news agency, to report for all the British and world press. Their behaviour was praised by Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, as mature and sympathetic.

We go back to Dunblane by way of developing a theme explored in "Paper Round" last week, which asked if

PAPER ROUND

Brian MacArthur



British newspapers were as good as they were 30 and 40 years ago. Research on *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* demonstrated that although reports were shorter the amount of coverage was the same because most of the papers had up to four times

more pages a day (although the 5,000 words a day quoted for *The Daily Telegraph* was for foreign news, against 15,000 words-a-day of home news).

The question left begging was whether the quality of the coverage was still as good. Judging the annual crop of press awards suggests that it is, albeit that more space is now devoted to populist subjects — to sex, murder and the doings of pop stars.

Yesterday was typical. The postponement of the marriage of the Oasis pop star Liam Gallagher and the actress Patsy Kensit merited five columns on the front page of *The Guardian* and eight on inside pages of *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Yet, as Alan Rusbridger, Editor of *The Guardian*, would point out, 5 per cent of the British population — more than two million — applied for tickets to Oasis's Knebworth concert last year. That makes Oasis newsworthy in any paper.

Also typical last week was the significant victory for press freedom won by *The Guardian* when a High Court jury threw out a libel action against it by five Metropolitan police officers — and the reports in *The Times* that Sotheby's systematically broke the spirit, if not the

letter, of the law when smuggling art treasures to Britain.

Over the past few weeks, I have also helped to judge the BT and Commission for Racial Equality press awards, the winners of which are still to be announced. Even the most jaded judge would be impressed by the quality of the entries, whether from local weeklies, regional dailies or the nationals.

The *Manchester Mercury* and *Paddington Mercury* are small weekly papers in London with neither the staff nor the money to back investigations available to the nationals. Yet single-handedly the reporter Saba Salman exposed the appalling conditions in Westminster's biggest hostel, mainly for homeless refugees, which she described as a cockroach-infested death-trap. She harried Westminster council for six months and forced it to issue summonses against the owners.

That is only one of several examples of serious, sympathetic commitment by regional newspaper editors to improving race relations in their communities. There is writing in such papers as *Liverpool's Daily Post*, *Liverpool Echo* and the *Manchester Evening News* — and I was judging only papers from the North West for BT — which has as much power as anything in the nationals.

Nobody would claim that everything in Britain's national newspapers is as good as it was 30 years ago. Some is worse: why, for instance, are there no critics of the stature of Tynan, Cardus, Newman or Hobson?

Some, however, is much better: the standard of interviewing, sports writing, features and commentary has certainly improved. On Monday, for instance, judges had to decide between Libby Purves, Janet Daley, Tom Hibbert, Ian Hislop and Richard Littlejohn as Columnist of the Year — or Sam Kiley and Christopher Thomas of *The Independent*, Ed Valliary and Martin Walker of *The Guardian*, and Tony Gallagher of the *Daily Mail* as foreign correspondent.

At Dunblane — or in its work, day by day and week by week — the British press had a good year in 1996.



Reporting from Dunblane was "mature and sympathetic", said Lord Wakeham

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NEWS

Teachers face sack if pupils fail

Teachers could be sacked over their pupils' poor results for the first time since the Victorian school boards, under plans put forward by Gillian Shephard.

The Education Secretary said that the system of appraising teachers would be given teeth, so that the worst could be removed. And as well as becoming accountable for children's results, teachers would be judged on their ability to maintain discipline and "teach interestingly". Pages 1, 9

Judge asks father and sons to confess

A father and his two teenage sons convicted of plotting to kill his domineering wife were asked by a judge to confess their parts in the crime. Mr Justice Allott said at the end of the month-long trial that he "still did know the whole truth" of the conspiracy to murder Eve Howells. Page 1

Dorrell put down

Tensions among Cabinet ministers over their election roles burst into the open when John Major publicly slapped down Stephen Dorrell over a possible Scottish assembly. Page 1

Healthy 'patient'

The English Patient, a tale of love and treachery in wartime became the most feted British film in Hollywood history, winning 12 Oscar nominations. Page 1

Police powers

Michael Howard announced new concessions to his plans to give the police fresh powers to enter and bug private homes and offices. Page 2

Mind bending

A new generation of drugs capable of turning ordinary students into double-first graduates could be available within five years, scientists said. Page 4

Silent witnesses

Five white men accused of murdering the black teenager Stephen Lawrence refused to answer questions when they went into the witness box at the resumed coroner's inquest. Page 5

Church marriage plea

The Very Rev David Edwards, Provost Emeritus of Southwark Cathedral called for the Church of England to permit second marriages in cases of adultery or desertion. Page 6

Naked singer given a red card

The man who was to have sung the Italian national anthem at tonight's World Cup match at Wembley has been dropped after objections to newspaper photographs of him singing *Nessun Dorma* in the nude. Alessandro Bernardi, a Venetian-born former dishwasher, has been replaced after Dr Paolo Galli, the Italian Ambassador, complained. Page 1

Struggle in car

A businessman described how he and his wife struggled in their Range Rover as two robbers armed with knives attacked them for their watches. Page 5

'Naive' minister

A Tory minister showed naivety while serving on an inquiry into damaging accusations against a senior colleague, a Commons investigation is to decide. Page 11

Palestinians freed

The right-wing Israeli government honoured another key element of the peace deal when it began releasing 31 Palestinian women prisoners. Page 12

Nuclear threat

President Yeltsin's chief security adviser said Russia should be prepared to use nuclear weapons. The Foreign Ministry said that remarks by Ivan Rybkin were "hypothetical". Page 13

EU fuel tax plan

Britain is heading for a new collision with the European Union over proposals to impose taxes on electricity, coal and natural gas. The plans have appalled Eurosceptic MPs. Page 14

Spanish custom

A stark clash of cultures, centred on the welfare of a light grey donkey, took place in Villanueva de la Vera, pitting animal rights activists against stubborn Spanish peasants. Page 15



Tom Stoppard (left) and David Hare in front of a mural featuring playwrights erected to cover renovations at the Royal National Theatre

BUSINESS

Woolwich: An overwhelming majority of members of the Woolwich voted in favour of floating on the stock market. Page 25

Sears: The troubled company that owns Selfridges suffered a setback when the sale of Freemans catalogues to Littlewoods was referred to the MMC. Page 25

Unilever: The Anglo-Dutch consumer goods group, is to sell its speciality chemicals business for around £5 billion and spend the money on food and detergent acquisitions. Page 25

Markets: The FT-SE 100 Index fell 3.4 to close at 4304.3. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 97.0 to 98.2 after a rise from \$1.6331 to \$1.6426 and from DM2.7051 to DM2.7458. Page 28

SPORT

Football: England may throw Matt Le Tissier, Alan Shearer's former partner at Southampton, into the fray for the match against Italy at Wembley. Pages 44, 48

Rugby union: John Hall, director of rugby for the past year at Bath, became the most substantial casualty so far of the game's professional era in England. Page 46

World Cup: The president of Uefa hinted that he would still support Germany to stage the 2006 finals despite Uefa giving England an equal chance. Page 48

Racing: Dublin Flyer heads the weights for the 150th Grand National with 12 stone, although he is not certain to run. A strong Irish entry is headed by Feathered Gale. Page 43

Postman Steve: Rising novelist Stephen Blanchard rises early to deliver the mail, then goes home to write remarkable books in richly descriptive prose. Page 37

Rising star: At 28 Clio Gould is already a principal violinist, an artistic director, a recording artist and a soloist. But she is having trouble defining herself. Page 37

Blank cheque: Today the Natwest opens its art collection to the public in an art gallery that was once a great City banking hall. The bank's chairman explains why. Page 38

Branching out: Steve Buscemi, darling of the independent film scene for his weirdo roles in *Reservoir Dogs* and *Fargo*, this week adds director and writer to his CV with *Trees Lounge*. Page 39

IN THE TIMES

FILMS
Geoff Brown reviews Kenneth Branagh's epic *Hamlet*, and John Cleese's *Fierce Creatures*

BOOKS
Oleg Gordievsky on Aldrich Ames, the spy who nearly sent him to the grave

TV LISTINGS

Preview: Desperate measures for the state home. *The Aristocracy* (BBC2, 9pm). Review: Rehabilitation of a Princess. Page 47

OPINION

Dumbing-down

Gillian Shephard's proposals will make an unhappy memorial for an underachieving minister. For all her protestations that she is injecting "rigour", the Education Secretary is engaged in dumbing-down the A level. Page 19

The right track

Rail privatisation has been a greater success than even the Government had hoped and its advocates can take credit for keeping their nerve and vision. Page 19

Hey, big spenders

As good Conservatives know, the market is the fairest way to determine prices. Page 19

MATTHEW PARRIS

Yesterday was Dennis Skinner's birthday. *The Beast of Bolsover* turned 65, and puce. Skinner was ambushed by Major, and MPs went wild. Page 2

SIMON JENKINS

The West Lothian question is like squaring the circle and Hunting the Shark... a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. Page 18

SUE CAMERON

Tony Blair and those close to him are considering which of our most influential public servants should be promoted. Page 18

PETER RIDDELL

British inflation is still higher than in much of the rest of Europe and longer-term interest rates remain well above German rates, adding to industry's costs. Page 11

SIMON BARNES

Sport has rules and a format for dealing with those who break them. Sport also has conventions and is powerless against those who will not abide by them. Page 46

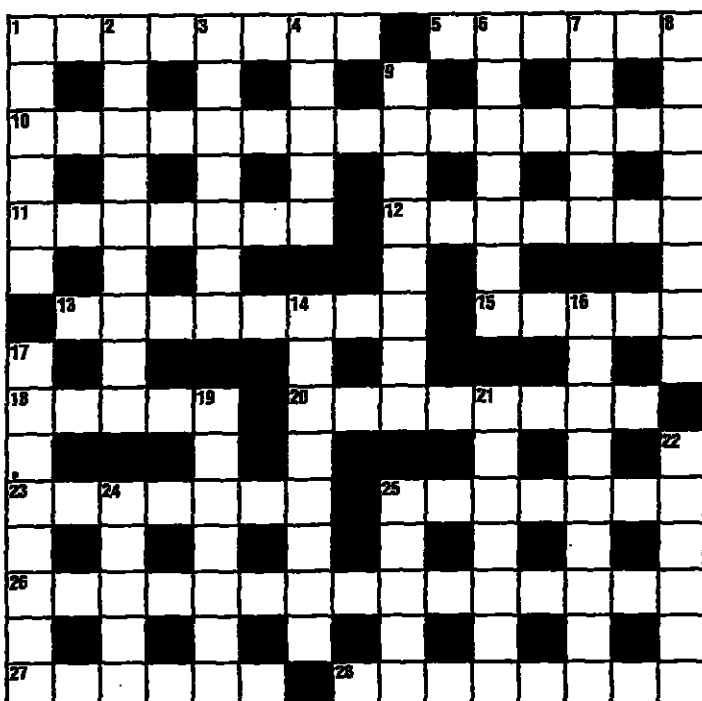
ANTHONY BAINES

Anthony Baines, musician: Captain Harold Chesterman, naval officer. Page 21

CONCERN

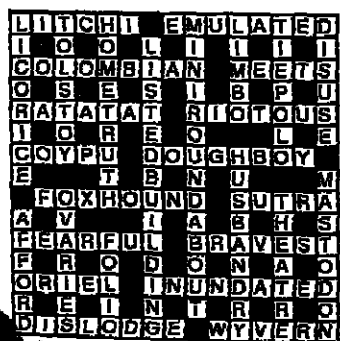
Concern about Nato expansion: Labour's freeze on top people's pay: Marconi chairman replies on archive sale. Page 19

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,401



- ACROSS**
- Learned about disastrous boat wreck (8).
 - Showing incongruity of an order restricting king (6).
 - Deals (also shuffles, cuts first) (5,3,7).
 - In theory, one's almost completed essay (2,5).
 - One depends on a blade in the morning (3-4).
 - Queen, in bother, coming to unpleasant end (8).
 - Found in dictionary: "a hooligan" (5).
 - Commandeer an extra estate (5).
 - Devious NUT to rig teachers' work (8).
 - Come back — person's collapsed and died (7).
 - Decide to have another go at clue? (7).
- DOWN**
- Pelt animals following artist home (4,4,3,4).
 - Pest destroying potato (another root-crop's half-left) (6).
 - Call back about fire in the sky (8).
 - Party's taken on soldiers in area of military operations (6).
 - Beer brewed with hops found around one's living area (9).
 - Drunkard beats another up (7).
 - Snub emperor, prematurely terminating doomed individual (5).
 - Angler means to catch a pike in America, for example (7).
 - African river spirit raised with a show of hesitation (5).
 - Civil engineer rings up about second quantity of sewage (8).
 - Stiff examination dictates treatment (4,4).
 - Capable of taking on girlfriend knowing what's just happened? (2-2,4).
 - Damn insecure? Relax! (4,5).
 - Food needed for the first mate (5,3).
 - Not complaining about coming in second to work (7).
 - Stay north of Land's End? Yes, for time off (4-3).
 - Fewer things to do, for example (8).
 - Point lace (5).
 - Kingdom Lear distributed with onset of madness (5).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,400



AIR INFORMATION

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HIGHEST & LOWEST

Yesterday's highest day temp: Tooting, 12°C (54°F); lowest day temp: Loch Lomond, 1°C (34°F); highest rainfall: Loughborough, 0.6in; highest sunshine: Aberdeen, 7 hrs

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

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FORECAST

General: area of low pressure will move east over northern Britain. England and Wales will have rain at times, and northern England brighter spells with showers. Brighter, showery conditions will spread across western parts during the afternoon. It will be very windy but fairly mild. Scotland and Northern Ireland will have sunny spells and showers but Scotland will be cloudy and wet at first and the rain may be slow to clear in the east. Breezy and mild in the south; near-normal temperatures in the north.

London, SE, Central S & SW England, E Anglia, Midlands, Channel Isles, S Wales: cloudy, rain at times. Brighter, showery conditions will spread from the west. Wind strong southwesterly, turning westerly. Very mild. Max temp 12°C (54°F).

E England, Central N, NE England: mainly dry, bright or sunny intervals developing. Some patchy rain in the afternoon. Wind fresh to strong southwesterly. Very mild. Max temp 11°C (52°F).

N Wales, NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland: bright or sunny intervals developing, but also showers. Wind strong southwesterly, becoming northwesterly later. Very mild. Max temp 11°C (52°F).

Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, Central Highlands, Moray Firth, NE Scotland, Orkney: cloudy, rain at times. Clearer weather perhaps spreading from the west during the evening. Wind variable, becoming fresh northwesterly. Max temp 6°C (43°F).

SW & W Scotland, Glasgow, Argyll: rain for a time. Becoming brighter with showers. Wind variable, becoming northwesterly, moderate to fresh. Max temp 8°C (46°F).

Shetland: bright start, showers at times. Wind mainly easterly, light to moderate. Max temp 5°C (41°F).

Outlook: rain spreading east, then sunny spells and showers. Becoming windy in the north.

AROUND BRITAIN YESTERDAY

24 hrs to 6 pm: b=bright; c=cloud; d=dry; dr=drizzle; ds=drizzle; f=fog; g=gale; h=hail; i=ice; m=moderate; n=normal; o=overcast; r=rain; s=sunny; t=thunder; v=very; w=windy; x=extreme; y=yellow; z=zebra

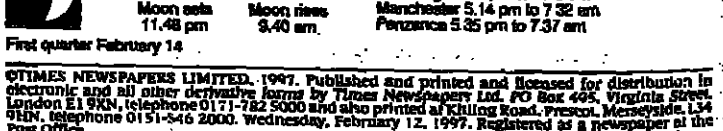
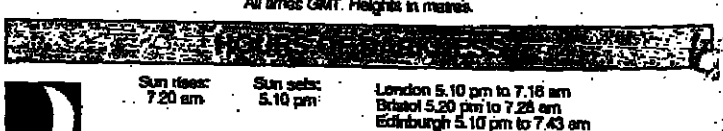
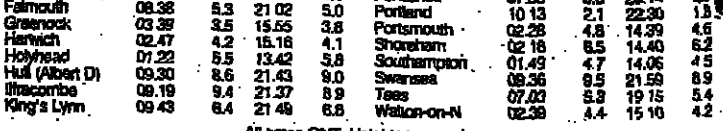
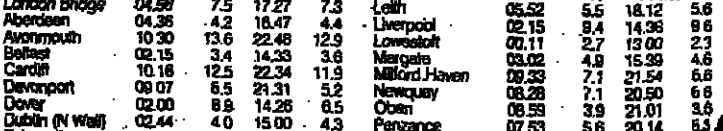
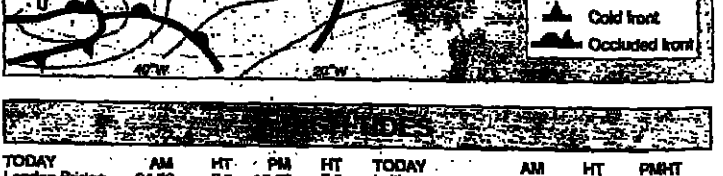
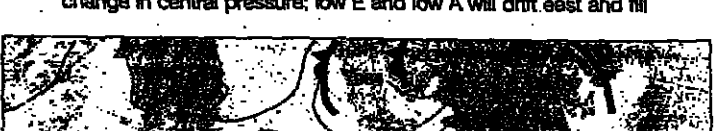
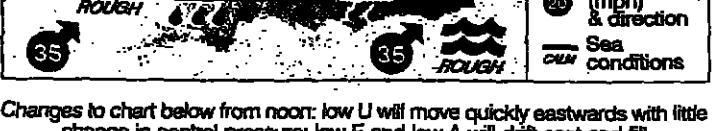
Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	7.0	0.0	48	7.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48
Anglo	0.0	0.0	48	0.0	0.0	48

ABROAD

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s
Alaska	14	57	c	16	61	s

Temperatures in midday local time. X = not available

CHANGES TO CHART BELOW FROM NOON: LOW U WILL MOVE QUICKLY EASTWARDS WITH LITTLE CHANGE IN CENTRAL PRESSURE; LOW E AND LOW A WILL DRIFT EAST AND FILL



shippers spilled out of the scepticism.

INSIDE
SECTION
2
TODAY

ARTS

Stephen Blanchard,
novelist of a
first-class stamp
PAGES 37-39

HOMES

Rebirth of the urban
village idea in
a Scottish setting
PAGE 41

SPORT

Hall made to
pay for Bath's
fall from grace
PAGES 43-48

TELEVISION
AND
RADIO
PAGES
46, 47

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997

Sterling highest since leaving ERM

By Janet Bush
ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE pound surged to its highest level since the day it was ejected from the European exchange rate mechanism in 1992, profiting from increasing dejection about the German economy which depressed the mark.

Sterling's index against a basket of currencies closed at 98.2, up from 97 on Monday, its highest level since September 16, 1992. It gained four pence against the mark to DM274.58, a 52-month high.

The pound's rally came as John Major said the British economy was more competitive than it had been in a long time, despite sterling's rise in recent months. Some foreign exchange dealers took his comments as a signal that the Government is not overly concerned about the pound's appreciation and will not act to limit its rise.

At the same time, the mark was depressed by concerns about sluggish growth and rising unemployment. A BBC report said rising unemployment had pushed expectations for Germany's budget deficit to 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product this year, above the Maastricht treaty limit of 3 per cent. The German Finance Ministry took issue with the report, saying it had no reason to change its forecast of a deficit of 2.9 per cent of GDP.

The pound has resumed its rise despite expectations that Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, will continue to hold out against Bank of England demands for higher base rates. Yesterday, Howard Davies, deputy governor of the Bank, said the Bank was still looking for a quarter-point rise.

In a speech to the Housing Corporation conference, Mr Davies said: "Let this observation create unnecessary alarm, I should say that the rise in rates that we think necessary to meet the target is modest. We have been talking about 0.25 per cent in the short term, with perhaps a little more later in the year."

His remarks came on the eve of today's publication of the Bank's latest Inflation Report, expected by City analysts to revise up its inflation forecasts and emphasise the need for a modest tightening of monetary policy.

Mr Clarke has withstood Bank demands for a rise in rates for the past three monthly monetary meetings, citing in part the strength of the pound.

British construction orders were 8 per cent higher in the fourth quarter compared with the previous three months and 1 per cent higher in 1996 as a whole than in 1995.



Sir Brian Jenkins, right, and John Stewart, added their smiles to that of the new Woolwich girl after members voted in favour of the society's flotation

Fresh blow for Sears as Freemans sale referred

By Alasdair Murray

SEARS, the troubled retail company, suffered a new setback yesterday when the £395 million sale of Freemans to Littlewoods was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The decision surprised the City and shares in Sears slipped 2p, to close at 83½p. The market is concerned that it could jeopardise Sears' plans to use the sale proceeds for a share buyback or special dividend and casts further doubts over the future of Liam Strong, the chief executive.

Sears described the referral as "disappointing" but said it

remains confident that the deal is not anti-competitive. Both companies reaffirmed their intention to proceed with a sale — although the original deal has now lapsed.

John Taylor, Minister for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, said the planned deal raised competition concerns. If approved, Littlewoods would increase its share of the total UK mail order market from 15.5 per cent to almost 25 per cent — in touching distance of the market leader, Great Universal Stores.

Freemans occupies the number three position, making profits of £38 million in 1995 — although 1996 profits

are expected to be lower. Littlewoods hopes to make annual cost savings of £25 million by integrating the businesses, which could result in job losses at Freemans' sites in London, Peterborough, Sheffield and Orkington.

But the threat of job losses is not regarded as a major factor in the referral, which the market believes comes after strong lobbying from European competitors.

Sears, which also owns Selfridges, Warehouse and Shoe Express, put Freemans up for sale as part of its plan to revitalise its flagging business. The company also promised to make a £410 million

share buyback or special dividend using the cash from the sale and money raised from a separate disposal of a shopping centre in July.

Analysts expect that the two companies will respond by pointing to competition in the wider market from European mail order businesses and from the catalogue arms of retailers such as Next and Burton. Most analysts believe the deal will ultimately be cleared, leaving Sears able to complete on time its plans to return money to shareholders.

Sears has endured a torrid spell recently. It issued a profit warning at the beginning of January and later in the

month faced public criticism from small shareholders at the EGM called to approve the sale of Freemans.

The profit warning, coupled with a poor Christmas trading statement, led analysts to downgrade full-year forecasts by around 20 per cent, to £80 million. The company is also taking an exceptional loss of £220 million on the Freemans sale, which coupled with a £25 million loss from the reversion of stores leased to Facia, will plunge Sears into the red to the tune of around £165 million when it announces its full-year results at the end of April.

The MMC report has to be completed by June 9.

Woolwich members support flotation

By Caroline Merrell

AN overwhelming majority of the members of the Woolwich Building Society have voted in favour of its proposals to convert and float on the stock market.

Of the 70 per cent of investing members entitled to vote who did so, 95 per cent backed the resolution, the same percentage as for borrowing members.

Around 1,300 Woolwich members attended a special general meeting at the London Arena yesterday to discuss the proposals. The questions from the floor ranged from concerns about the share distribution to a demand that the Woolwich should not get involved in the transport of land mines after conversion.

Thomas Lines, an investing member, wanted to hear the arguments against conversion in detail. This request was refused by Sir Brian Jenkins, Woolwich chairman, who claimed that the issue was covered entirely by the transfer document. Mr Lines said: "I am now talking to the Nationwide — their mortgage rate is relatively low."

Roger Hill, an investing member, wanted to know why the conversion costs were so high. He said: "The costs of transfer are exorbitant at £50 million." Stanley Wentworth, an investing member, said he wanted the board to guarantee that it would not get involved in the arms trade or the export of land mines.

The Woolwich has been one of the most vociferous opponents of the Building Societies Bill. Under the terms of the Bill, societies that go on the acquisition trail after flotation lose their protection against takeover. John Stewart, Woolwich chief executive, said: "We are unlikely to abandon conversion, even if the Bill goes ahead."

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100	4304.3	(-3.4)
FTSE All share	2086.82	(-2.04)
Nasdaq	Closed	
New York	6836.55	(+30.02)
S&P Composite	787.49	(+2.08)

US RATES

Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(9 1/4%)
Long Bond	5 7/8%	(9 7/8%)
Yield	5.70%	(5.71%)

EURO CURRENCY

3-month Interbank	6 1/4%	(6 1/4%)
Life long bill	11 1/2%	(11 1/2%)
Future (Mar)		

STERLING

New York		
London	1.8445	(1.8428)
DM	1.8424	(1.8354)
DM	2.7482	(2.7058)
FF	9.2872	(9.1318)
Sfr	2.2547	(2.2325)
Yen	202.13	(200.83)
£ Index	98.2	(97.0)

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

London	1.8720	(1.8583)
DM	5.6420	(5.5985)
Sfr	1.4240	(1.4258)
Yen	122.80	(122.78)
£ Index	103.1	(102.7)

TOKYO CLOSE

Tokyo close	Yen 123.20	
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WORLD SEA RATES

Brant 15-day (Apr)	\$20.70	(\$20.75)
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COMMODITIES

London close	\$339.55	(\$341.15)
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* denotes midday trading price

Petrol wars

Petrol pump wars have taken their toll of British Petroleum, which revealed yesterday that it had lost £85 million of profits on the forecourts. BP also saw a further £60 million eroded by the strength of sterling. Page 26

Nil return

Reuters, the financial information and trading group, has quietly shelved plans to return more than £600 million in cash to shareholders. Page 27

Unilever to sell off chemicals business

By Sarah Cunningham

UNILEVER, the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods group, yesterday unveiled plans to sell its specialty chemicals business in a move that is expected to raise up to £5 billion. The money is likely to be spent on acquisitions in its core areas of food, toiletries and detergents.

The disposal announcement, better than expected full-year profits sent Unilever's shares soaring nearly 6 per cent, from £13.93 to £14.71½.

Niall Fitzgerald, who took over last year as chairman of the Magnum ice cream to Calvin Klein perfumes conglomerate, said new investments would be made in "markets where we have strength and where we can get growth".

He did not rule out returning some cash to shareholders, but only if sound acquisitions could not be found.

He is particularly keen on investing in emerging markets: "I will be surprised if half the business is not in develop-



Fitzgerald: new investments

ing markets in ten years," he said. It is now 28 per cent.

Disposing of the chemicals businesses will temporarily wipe out Unilever's entire net debts of £1.7 billion. Buyers are now being sought and analysts see no problem in arranging a trade sale.

The four businesses — National Starch & Chemical, Quest International, Uni-

chema International and Crofield — employ 16,000 people in 35 countries and had turnover last year of £3 billion.

They made a profit of £415 million, producing the best margins in the group. Analysts estimated that they would be sold for between 1.5 and two times turnover.

Mr Fitzgerald said that underperforming parts remaining in the group, particularly in the European food business, were also likely to be sold.

Unilever wants to concentrate on margarine, tea, ice cream and some sauces and frozen foods. The cost of BSE to the business last year was put at about £40 million.

The group made a pre-tax profit of £2.66 billion in 1996, 15 per cent up on the previous year. The final dividend of 21.76p (22.35p) gives a full-year dividend of 32.05p (29.40p), an increase of 9 per cent. It is payable on May 23.

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Virtuality declared insolvent

By Fraser Nelson

VIRTUALITY, the virtual reality firm whose shares were suspended last week, has called in administrators after finally being declared insolvent.

The company said that it reached a cash crisis after royalties from selling its virtual reality headsets failed to cover the sharp decline in revenue from its arcade games. It now owes its creditors more than £7 million.

Arthur Andersen, its administrator, said that it would keep the company running at least until money from the headsets started to come in. Andersen said: "Virtuality has world-beating technology, but the cost of developing this has drained the company of cash."

Virtuality still has a \$15 million contract with Philips, the Dutch electronics group. European rights for the headset technology are in discussion. Virtuality shares, which came to market at 170p four years ago, are suspended at 68½p.

Securities firms face £1bn EMU bill

By Jason Nisbet

EUROPEAN Monetary Union will cost City securities houses more than £1 billion to implement, bringing widespread redundancies and could render billions of pounds of long-term debt issues and derivatives deals null and void.

These shock conclusions are contained in a report for the International Securities Markets Association, the bond and derivatives dealers' trade association, and are supported by leading market practitioners.

ISMA commissioned Hannah Scobie, of the European Economic and Financial Centre, to interview 900 firms on how they were adapting for EMU. She found that some were looking at bills of

more than £5 million for implementing legal and technological changes. The total expected cost for those she spoke to was more than £1.15 billion.

In addition Professor Scobie found that some firms said some areas of their business, such as bond arbitrage, could see a drop of up to 60 per cent in trading volumes. "The impact is substantial," she told *The Times*. "The firms said they are going to have to remove staff in those areas."

The outlay for changing documentation and legal bills will be key costs. Operators in the bonds and derivatives markets are concerned that many deals they entered into on their own behalf, and for clients, could lose their foundation in law. The lawyers reckon

bond issues in sterling, French francs or other European Union currencies should be fine because of the legal principle of *Lex Monetae*, which allows a country to change its currency.

But issues in ecu are not covered. Legal opinion is that Ecu62.6 billion (£54 billion) of bonds issued before the Maastricht treaty was signed may be in trouble because there is no legal basis for repaying the debt in euros.

The problem is greater in the swaps market, where one type of debt is exchanged for another. These are based on generally accepted interest rates, such as the London Interbank Offered Rate. But Libor will be replaced by a euro rate, as will other interest rates. "These changes may have de-

stroyed the basis for the transaction," said Edward Murray, a partner at Allen & Overy, the law firm. "A disadvantaged party could easily sue, saying: 'This is not the deal I entered into.'"

The dealers are also concerned about mayhem in the government bond markets in 1999, when the three-year process of implementing EMU starts. Germany, France, Belgium and, possibly, Italy have said they will start issuing their government debt in euros, but there will be no other bonds around for pricing comparisons. "There will be a liquidity issue," said Michael Lewis, senior economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. "The countries say they may start converting their old debt into euros, but at what price?"

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Amstrad to I a rival to F

□ New broom shaking up Unilever □ Better mix for US spirits □ Fines for Barlow Clowes auditors

FitzGerald's Dutch courage

□ CURIOUS people, the Dutch — they seem to like us. Anglo-French corporate marriages tend to end in hell, the French adept at establishing creeping control. Germans like control from the off, which is why they frown on mergers. No sooner had BMW established a joint venture with part of Rolls-Royce, the engine maker, than speculation started of an outright takeover.

By contrast, three Anglo-Dutch marriages of different vintages have traded successfully without either party seeking or gaining control. The second oldest is Unilever, which did something quite remarkable yesterday. It started the stock market.

Remarkable, but not unprecedented. Yesterday's rise of almost 6 per cent in Unilever's shares, as full-year profits outstripped expectations and speciality chemicals went up for sale, was matched by a similar jump in November after third-quarter figures were again better than expected. You have to be a Unilever watcher of rather longer standing to know just why this is unusual.

This used to be one of the duller companies on the stock market. Quarterly figures popped up, always on a Friday for some perverse reason. From then could be pieced together the information that ice cream sold well in Transylvania, that

deodorants were the rage in Belize. But somehow the bigger picture remained hazy.

Niall FitzGerald started the process of change well before he became one of two chairmen in September. He is now planning to exchange steady businesses with stable margins of 14 per cent, worth as much as £5 billion for — what? Forget that politically correct guff about returning cash to shareholders. He wants the quarter of the group's business now in emerging markets to double in ten years. Some of this will come from steady investment, as with the joint ventures in ice cream and detergent already established in China.

Much will come by acquisition. Established Western businesses with limited exposure to emerging countries will not be enough, so logic dictates risky purchases in those markets. Some earnings dilution is inevitable at first. He needs to move fast, which presumably explains selling chemicals rather than raising the cash from shareholders or banks.

Unilever shares stand on 16 times this year's earnings and

yield just 3 per cent, which suggests much of Mr FitzGerald's plans are already in the share price.

One caveat. There are already fault lines opening up between him and his Dutch equivalent, Morris Tabaksblat. An energetic new broom has once before tried to shake up one of these sleepy Anglo-Dutch combines. That was at Reed Elsevier. His name was Peter Davis, and, for his pains, the Dutch fired him.

The sybarites strike back

□ "PLEASURE revenge" might turn out to be one of the better imports from across the Atlantic. The nation that gave us compulsory jogging and the new Puritanism might be about to provide the necessary backlash.

Figures from Impact International, the specialist drinks consultant, show that consumption of distilled spirits in the US rose 0.3 per cent last year. That may not sound a lot, but it is startling after 15 years of falling sales. Premium brands, many

PENNINGTON



owned by British drinks groups such as Grand Metropolitan, Guinness and Allied Domecq, showed a 4.9 per cent rise. Of the top 25 brands, only four saw a downturn.

There are a number of factors behind the sudden fondness of the American consumer for a quality drop of the hard stuff. The drinks groups have been busy inventing new flavour twists to appeal to the young — strawberry and cinnamon vodkas, for example. The US economy and the stock market are both on a high, and unemployment is low.

But some of the boost for spirits is down to pleasure revenge, the phrase coined to reflect the willingness of con-

sumers to award themselves the odd non-politically correct treat after the years of deprivation — consumption of red meat in the US, for example, has not been as high since 1983.

Impact links this to the boom in cigar smoking, with special bars springing up. You do not smoke a fine Havana without a glass of premium Cognac or its equivalent at your elbow. One brandy even comes with one cigar per bottle.

Of the ten fastest-growing brands, three apiece are owned by Seagram, of the US, and IDV, which is owned by GrandMet. Guinness's Hennessy brandy is up there too, even if the fastest-growing brand, a weird vodka in a cobalt blue bottle that first took off in the Midwest, is as yet independent. The bad news is that of the four drinks that showed a fall in consumption, two are owned by, one might have guessed, Allied Domecq.

This does not represent an immediate revival of the fortunes of the drinks industry. But it does suggest that those big drinks groups such as IDV, Allied Domecq and Seagram that have

pruned their secondary brands over the past couple of years and concentrated on the big names are on the right track.

Inquiry result is a blast from the past

□ THE official inquiry into the South Sea Bubble has been published. Leading stockbrokers, almost three centuries dead, are severely censured. Fines have been levied, in early 18th Century coinage of course — several shillings a man. Justice grinds slowly, but it grinds exceedingly small.

None of this may be true, but another inquiry into a scandal that seems to belong to another century has finally reached the light of day. Barlow Clowes, from the years 1984 to 1988, offered extraordinary returns on dull investments such as gilts. Too good to be true — and it was.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants threw the matter to disciplinary scheme in January 1989. This week the procedure ground to its end with a fine of £300,000, reduced from

£350,000, on partners of Spicer & Pegler, Barlow Clowes' accountants. The in-house financial controller was fined £5,000.

During the period of the inquiry, Spicer has changed its name and been subsumed into a much larger practice. Then the name changed again: the remnants can today be traced to Deloitte & Touche. Half its 300-plus partners have retired. The in-house man, Edward John Godfrey, is like a character out of Somerset Maugham, eking out a straitened existence in Portugal. Investors have been compensated for most of their losses. The main villain, Peter Clowes, has served four years in jail and is a free man again.

The ICA says a new disciplinary procedure should be quicker. Alas, we are still waiting for positive evidence of this.

Good, Evans

□ CHRIS EVANS, the tycoon behind Toad — silly name, that — whose chief executive walked out on Monday, was initially reluctant to pay any compensation. Now it seems the lawyers are circling for some going-away money. Nonsense. Charles Parker quit after just 27 days, left the company in the lurch and sent the shares tumbling. Mr Evans should stay firm; he doesn't deserve a penny.

Reuters puts buyback plan on hold

BY ERIC REGULY

REUTERS, the financial information and trading group, has quietly shelved plans to return more than £600 million in cash to shareholders.

Reuters is still officially searching for the "appropriate method" to pare down its £1 billion cash pile, but Rob Rowley, finance director, said yesterday that the company is devoting little energy to the project. "We're actually just standing back for the moment," he said. "We may just be a follower rather than a leader next time."

Tax changes last year forced Reuters to scrap plans to return £613 million to shareholders by way of a share buyback and special dividend. Peter Job, chief executive, played down speculation that the company would spend the cash on an acquisition instead. He said: "We don't want to be pressed, just because we have the money, to make acquisitions we don't really want."

His comments came as Reuters reported a 17 per cent increase in pre-tax profits, to £701 million, in the year to December 31, on turnover of

£2.9 billion, up 8 per cent. Earnings per share were 30.4p, compared with 25.8p, and the operating profit margin rose from 20.4 per cent to 22 per cent. The results were in line with City forecasts.

Mr Job said revenue growth was unlikely this year because of the company's inability to keep up with demand for its new range of financial information products, known as the 3,000 range. Of the nearly 15,000 such systems ordered so far, only 2,500 have been installed. The installation pace is not expected to improve until the second half.

The strength of sterling will also affect growth. Reuters noted that if the year-end exchange rates had been used to convert the 1996 results, overall revenue would have been reduced by £230 million and operating profit by £100 million.

The final dividend of 9p a share, to be paid on April 28, makes the full-year dividend 11.75p, up 20 per cent.

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Dow Jones feed, page 29

Gulf close to bid victory

BY PAUL DURMAN

GULF Canada Resources moved decisively towards victory in its £495 million battle for Clyde Petroleum, buying heavily in the market to lift its stake to 27.9 per cent.

Gulf Canada spent more than £102 million on 85.6 million shares at the 120p offer price. Among the stakes acquired by Cazenove, Gulf Canada's broker, was a block of 13.1 million shares held by CIN Management, manager of the coal industry pension funds.

Gulf Canada said: "The decision by shareholders to sell reinforces Gulf Canada's belief that its offer is full and fair and demonstrates that the market now accepts there will be no counter bidder."

The bid is due to close on Tuesday. The battle has been fought over valuation methods, with Gulf Canada claiming that Clyde should be valued according to its net assets, while the British company based its 133p a share valuation on cashflow multiples.

Domecq set for £20m profits dent

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

ALLIED DOMECQ, the drinks company, yesterday gave warning that the soaring pound would knock around £20 million off profits.

But the shares rose 12½p, closing at 427½p, after a relatively upbeat five-month trading statement, concluding that underlying group profits would be ahead of last year.

Sir Christopher Hogg, chairman, said that trading had been broadly in line with expectations but growth would be concentrated in the second half. Overall volumes of spirits and wines are at similar levels to last year with trading in the US stable, although market conditions remain difficult in much of Europe. The company made substantial volume gains in Brazil and Japan.

Allied said that its retail division is performing well and that pub profits will benefit from the release of uneconomic Carlsberg-Tetley supply agreements.

Amstrad to launch a rival to Psion

AMSTRAD is to launch a combined mobile phone and palm-top computer at the start of next year, putting it in direct competition with Psion, which had talks to take Amstrad over last year (Jason Nisse writes). Alan Sugar, Amstrad chairman, said the new product is being developed using technology in the group's two remaining operations, Dancall, the mobile phone business, and Viglen, which makes personal computers. Both operations

are now in profit after Dancall left the red in the last quarter. A £6.4 million write-off from selling £50 million of electrical goods left when Amstrad sold its consumer products side to Betacom meant that the group recorded losses of £1.78 million in the half year to 31 December (£5.4 million loss previously). Losses per share eased from 4p to 2.7p. There is an unchanged dividend of 1.25p.

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THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Knight of the long knives

MYRA KINGHORN, the 64,000 a year head of the Investors Compensation Scheme, had better be down the hatch. She has incurred the wrath of DIBB Lupton Alsop, the hard-headed law firm acting *pro bono* for elderly investors who lost money through Knight Williams. If that doesn't face her then Kinghorn should know that she has also made the redoubtable Kenneth Jordan, leader of the KW investors action group, very angry. Jordan tells me that the ICS promised to start paying out what could be a £7 million compensation bill to investors by the end of February. Now he says: "They are completely bogged down and leading us up the garden path. Watch out Myra."

Pick of Penguin

CONGRATULATIONS to Duncan Campbell-Smith. The bespectacled author and former journalist was yesterday promoted to managing director, group strategy, of the Penguin Group. The father of three boys, who is currently in South Africa on business, joined the publisher's UK management as business development director last May from Pearson, the international media group that owns Penguin.

THE coal industry certainly has a sense of timing. The World Coal Institute and the Confederation of UK Coal Producers are meeting today, Ash Wednesday, to discuss cleaning up the fuel.



"Ninety-five per cent said yes and 5 per cent said yes please"

Murphy's law

JOHN MAJOR can look forward to an angry letter from upset savers in Dorset. The unhappy bunch claims that they unfairly missed out on bonus payments of up to £13,500 when Lloyds Bank paid £1.5 billion for the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society last year. Brian Murphy, the building society ombudsman, argues that he investigated the complaints, and found that the society had acted according to the law. An aggrieved complainant has since rechristened Murphy "the building societies' spin doctor".

Kohl comfort

HALF a dozen bottles of wine are on their way from Helmut Kohl to David Marsh. The noble gesture follows his story from before Christmas that the director of European strategy at Robert Fleming was trying desperately to settle a bet with the German Chancellor. In December 1991, Marsh bet Kohl that EMU would not happen in 1997. The Euro-optimist was assured yesterday that six bottles of wine from the Chancellor's homeland were on their way. Cheers.

FRIENDS, family, and colleagues from Greig Middleton will gather in Norwich today for Francis Bullimore's memorial service. Sixty years a member of the Exchange, the father of the house was 83 when he died. His son, Tim, and grandson, Brett, at BZW and UBS respectively, are set to carry on the family tradition.

MORAG PRESTON

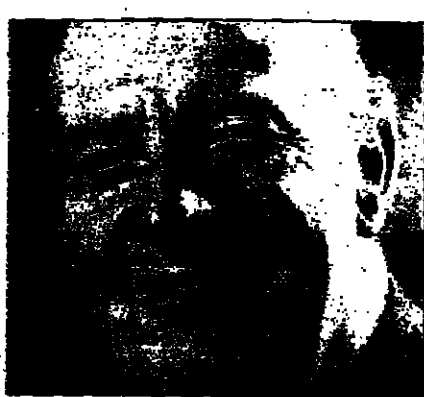
Robert Miller previews the bank reporting season and prospects for the year ahead

Plenty of bait for new shareholders

THIS time next year millions of people will tune into the bank reporting season, which this year officially begins on Friday with Lloyds TSB. They will be the new breed of shareholders created by the forthcoming stock market flotations of the Halifax, Alliance & Leicester, the Woolwich and Northern Rock. Many may be tempted to take their profits when they receive their free shares this summer. For those who hang on, however, and the bait is takeover and merger speculation that drives up the share price, this season of annual results could provide useful indicators for the future.

Not unnaturally, from the shareholder point of view, profits and dividends will dominate the headlines over the coming weeks, but the real question should be how are the banks going to invest that money? Credit Lyonnais, for example, estimates that the six banks reporting full-year figures in February and March will produce an 18 per cent increase in year-on-year profits to £12.8 billion.

For Lloyds TSB it will be a maiden presentation for Peter Ellwood, the newly installed chief executive who succeeded Sir Brian Pitman, who became chairman after Sir Robin Ibbis retired. Under the leadership of the two knights, and after the aborted plan to take over Standard Chartered, Lloyds has set out a clear vision of where it wants to be—in the middle of the retail high street. To achieve this Lloyds bought Cheltenham & Gloucester, one of the most successful purveyors of home loans, and turned it into its retail mortgage arm with branch outlets around the country. It also



Sir Brian: may expand in Latin America

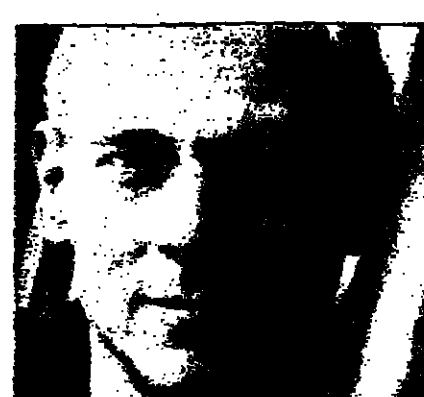
took a look at National & Provincial before the society fell to Abbey National. Then, in one of the more imaginative banking scoops of recent times, Lloyds swooped on TSB, before last year snapping up the remainder of Lloyds Abbey Life.

Nor has Sir Brian neglected opportunities abroad. He recently consolidated a banking partnership in Brazil and has developed a successful strategy in New Zealand. It is almost inconceivable that Sir Brian will rest on his laurels, and he could once again surprise the market with an acquisition in the next two years. He might choose to expand in Latin America or even in Australia, where ANZ Bank could be a tempting target.

Lloyds TSB will also keep an eye on Peter Birch over at Abbey National. Since it pioneered the road for building societies to

UK BANKS				
Report	1996	1995	Actual	Estimate
Pre-tax Profit in £m				
Abbey National	27 Feb	558	1,170	
Barclays	18 Feb	1,286	2,356	
Lloyds TSB	14 Feb	1,141	2,485	
NatWest	28 Feb	1,002	1,080	
HSBC Holdings	3 Mar	2,321	4,555	
Standard Chartered	28 Feb	448	870	

Source: Salomon Brothers



Taylor: breathed new life into Barclays

become stock market companies in 1989, the Abbey has proved a formidable player not just in retail banking, but in spreading its net successfully into Treasury, leasing and finance operations. Nowadays the Abbey, which is currently staking Scottish Amicable with the aim of doubling its life and pensions business, derives 42 per cent from activities outside of the traditional savings and loans arena. While the converging building societies are distracted by their market debuts it is just possible that the Abbey will launch a raid on the newly converted Norwich Union.

The banking team at Salomon Brothers predicts that the UK retail banking sector in 1997 should consist of all the converting societies, together with the Abbey and Lloyds TSB. Outside of that grouping another segment covering business and

international banking operations will embrace Barclays, NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland and Bank of Scotland.

The top team at Barclays, Martin Taylor and Andrew Buxton, who was recently appointed as a non-executive director of the Bank of England, have breathed new life into the bank, which also boasts the Barclaycard brand. Nevertheless, some analysts believe that Barclays has concentrated on building up BZW, its investment banking arm, with the appointment last year of the highly-rated Bill Harrison and the more recent creation of Barclays Global Investors, the world's second-largest fund manager, to the detriment of domestic banking. Barclays, for its part, argues that it is busy assessing how customers want their services delivered in the future, such as home computers, the Internet and over the

telephone. There is every chance, though, that messrs Taylor and Buxton, who in the recent past have bought back shares to enhance shareholder value, have an ace up their sleeves, and it could be a life or asset management purchase.

In terms of beating the opposition, however, Barclays has knocked NatWest from the number one spot over the past five years in terms of market capitalisation, with £18 billion to £14 billion respectively. Last year was a busy one for NatWest, headed by Lord Alexander of Weedon and Derek Wanless. Arguably their most inspired acquisition was that of Gartmore to bolster the asset management arm. Less obvious was the multimillion-pound purchase by NatWest Markets of JO Hambro Magan, the corporate finance boutique. True, there are obvious synergies with the US operation of Gleacher NatWest and NatWest Markets can genuinely claim to be a world class player in this sector, but this is a high-risk strategy.

On the genuinely international side of banking, only Standard Chartered and HSBC Holdings, owner of Midland Bank, can lay claim to this category. However, HSBC, headed by Sir William Purves, must be aware that there are several gaps in its UK domestic portfolio. Midland badly needs a boost and Sir William is thought to have a particular fondness for Royal Bank of Scotland.

For the forthcoming reporting season increased profits, possible further share buybacks and falling bad-debt provisions, will be the order of the day. The real fun, however, will begin next year, when bank boards will have to answer to millions more vociferous shareholders.

Why parties play the numbers game with the unemployed

Philip Bassett

overlays the political map of Britain with today's jobs data

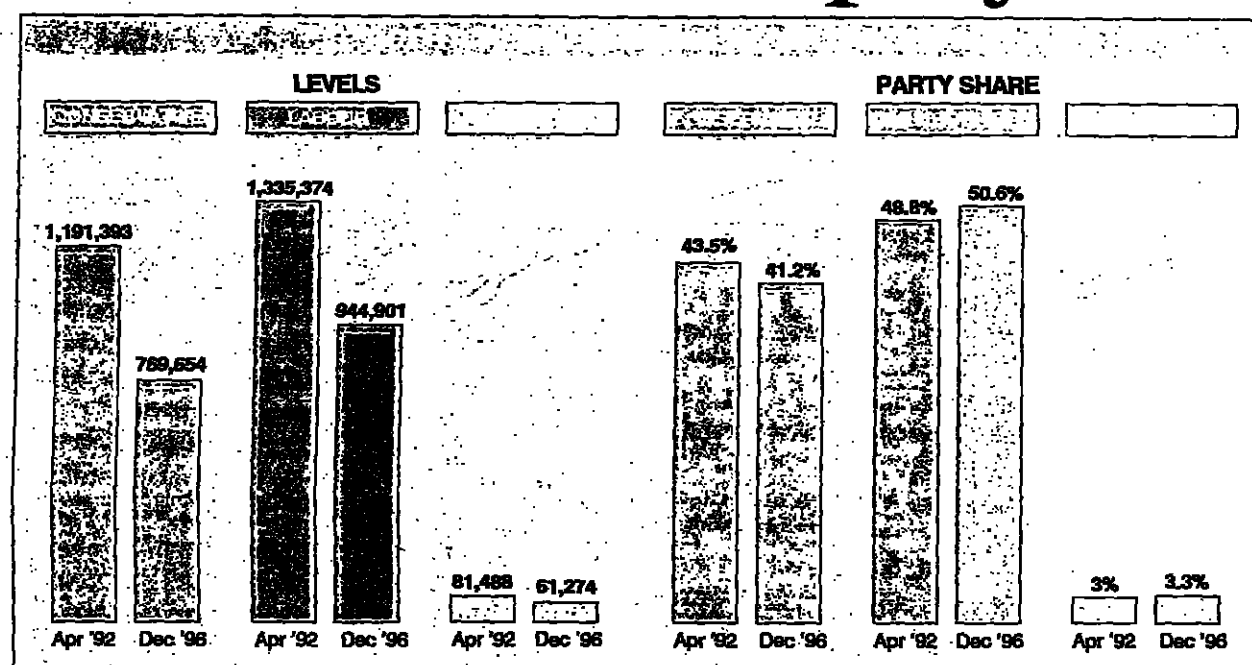
UNemployment will be a central feature of the coming election: how high it is, how much it has fallen, whether different policies will cut it still further, or send it soaring again. Although the economy will be crucial to the electoral outcome, for many voters most economic issues are complex and remote, except for unemployment.

Government ministers hope that job figures to be announced today will show a further drop in the number of people out of work and claiming benefit.

Analysts argue about the precise impact on voting patterns of economic issues, including unemployment, but politicians tend to be clearer: if unemployment is going up, that is bad for the Government; and if it is going down, that is good.

Seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment is currently standing at 1,884,700 — 7.7 per cent of the UK workforce. Claimant count figures are pulled together from local wards to form a national total. It is relatively simple therefore to show constituency unemployment on a party basis.

The analysis of political unemployment today by *The Times*, using figures held on Government computers, shows that unemployment is still higher in Labour than Conservative areas. Total unemployment in Conservative areas stands at just under 770,000, while in Labour areas it is now about 945,000. In Liberal Democrat seats, there are just over 61,000 unemployed. Over the past year, total Conservative and total Labour unemployment have largely mirrored each



other, though Lib Dem joblessness has shown a stability unrelated to either.

Looked at since the general election in April 1992, some significant patterns begin to emerge. Principally, they show that falling unemployment is differentially benefiting the Conservatives. Change in level. Since the last election, total unemployment has fallen by almost 443,000. Unemployment in Conservative areas is down 221,000, 30,000 more than the fall in Labour-area unemployment, which is down 191,000. Overall, Conservative unemployment is on average four-fifths the level of Labour unemployment.

Rate of change. The speed of change is faster in Conservative areas and is still accelerating. Unemployment in Conservative seats is down 35 per cent, compared with 29 per cent for Labour, and 25 per cent for the Lib Dems.

Change in share. The effect of the change in level is that the Conservatives' share of unemployment is falling, while the

share of the two other main parties is rising. In April 1992, Conservative seats held 43.5 per cent of the total unemployment, which was 2,694,500, or 9.5 per cent of the workforce. Labour's share stood at 48.8 per cent, and the Lib Dems just 3 per cent. Now, the Conservatives share of total unemployment stands at 41.2 per cent — down 5 per cent. Labour's share is up 4 per cent, at 50.6 per cent, and the Lib Dems share is up to 3.3 per cent. For all three parties, most of the change in share has been over the past year.

There may well be perfectly good reasons for this pattern, to do with the structure of business and type of employment in Conservative areas, which are likely to be more service-sector oriented and therefore in the part of the economy that has seen greater growth than manufacturing, which still tends to dominate the old industrial citadels of Scotland, the North and Wales, where Labour's seats are concentrated.

Looking at the parties' "average" seats — constituencies where the Parliamentary majority is closest to the average majorities for each of the parties — you might feel whether the improved job security is holding good in Ealing North for the Conservatives and whether the less good jobs statistics occur in Warrley West in the Midlands for Labour, and Mossley Hill, in Liverpool, for the Lib Dems.

Since the last election, Ealing North has seen a 23 per cent fall in its unemployment level, to 3,634. Against the overall trend, Labour's fall in Warrley West is faster, at 36 per cent, to 2,877. While unemployment in Mossley Hill is down by a quarter, to 4,232.

Or take the parties' safest seats. For the Lib Dems, that is Newbury, in Berkshire — won in a by-election, so the majority of 22,055 may, in practice, not be too safe, but where unemployment is down by 60 per cent since the election, to 1,350. For Labour, it is Blaenau Gwent, in Wales, where unemployment is down 21 per cent, to 2,555 in a seat with a majority of 30,067. And for the Conservatives it is

Huntingdon — John Major's own Parliamentary seat, with a majority of 36,230, where unemployment has fallen 45 per cent, to 2,142.

There are specific differences at local level — Newbury, for instance, has seen a recovery in high-tech and service employment and a refocusing of jobs with the departure of American military personnel from the Greenham Common airbase. The strands of the national pattern of political unemployment are also apparent locally. Economically, the fall in unemployment and the overall recovery are already making themselves felt in spending patterns on housing and in the high street.

What the political strategists know is that a question such as unemployment will be vital when the election campaign proper starts. How unemployment issues are handled could be crucial to the outcome of the election — and the clear benefit to the Conservatives in terms of how unemployment has improved may offer them a significant starting advantage.

Feud spells bad news for Dow Jones

Eric Reguly on a family squabble that could mark the end of one of America's great business dynasties

THE irony is delicious. *The Wall Street Journal*, the financial newspaper that has made a career of exposing the gaffes and misfortunes of corporate America, is owned by a company that has become a textbook case in mismanagement. Once mighty Dow Jones & Company has been a stock market laggard for more than a decade and its value has fallen by half during the richest bull market in history.

Two younger members of the Bancroft family, who control 70 per cent of the voting shares of Dow Jones, have finally lost patience with the management, led by Peter Kann, the chief executive.

Elisabeth Goth, 33, and her 41-year-old cousin, William Cox III, both descendants of Clarence Barron, who bought Dow Jones in 1902 and expanded it, have started a feud that could trigger the breakup of the group. In a letter, intercepted by the press, Elisabeth Goth said she was "growing more concerned by the day about the governance and direction of the company".

Last week, William Cox resigned as a Dow Jones manager. He said: "As a stockholder and family member I will continue to work toward the changes I feel are necessary to improve the company's long-term performance record."

The Wall Street Journal, the best known asset in the Dow Jones group, is not the problem. The source of discontent seems to be Telerate, the market data service that competes with Reuters and Bloomberg. Telerate, bought for \$1.6 billion in a series of transactions that ended in 1990, has been losing market share and its growth rates lag those of Reuters and Bloomberg.

Analysts say that the parent company has starved it of investment, using it as a cash cow. In 1996, the operating profits of the Telerate division, which includes the Dow Jones News Service, fell 21 per cent to \$156 million on turnover of



Kann: under pressure

\$980 million. Elisabeth Goth wants Dow Jones to unload Telerate. And she has support from Tim Price, the mutual fund tycoon who owns a 5.4 per cent stake in Dow Jones. However, in January the management received unanimous approval from the Dow Jones board, which in-

cludes four Bancroft family members, to spend \$650 million to overhaul Telerate.

The investment may be too little, too late. Analysts believe Telerate will ultimately get slapped on the auction block or, at least, recruit a partner.

Obvious contenders include Reuters, Bloomberg and Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publisher that is seeking a route into the financial services market. Reed is the leading candidate.

Reed would like to buy a stake in Bloomberg, but Michael Bloomberg, the founder, has shown no interest in selling. Nigel Stapleton, Reed's co-chairman, is monitoring the Telerate situation closely. One of his close financial advisers is Nancy Peretsman of Allen & Company, of New York. She is also Elisabeth Goth's adviser.

It is known that several investment firms have ap-

proached Reed with Telerate investment proposals. Telerate's price tag has been put at anywhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion although it could go for far less if its market share continues to erode. Citicorp actually paid Reuters to take on Quotron, a former Telerate competitor that was in terminal decline.

The squabble over the direction of Dow Jones could mark the end of one of America's great business dynasties. Clarence Barron bought the business from Charles Dow and Edward Jones — the names immortalised in the Dow Jones industrial average. Dow and Jones had a small financial news service and started *The Wall Street Journal* in 1889.

Barron expanded Dow Jones into the world's leading financial news empire. He started Barron's, the stock-picker's bible, in 1928. A string of small-town daily newspapers was added. By the early Eighties, *The Wall Street Journal* had a circulation of 2.1 million, making it the best-selling American daily paper.



ANTHONY HARRIS

The impending crash and the Tokyo factor

I couldn't last. The G7 communiqué on Sunday gave the authoritative view: "We believe that the major misalignments in exchange rates noted in our April 1995 communiqué have been corrected". On Monday the exchange markets obediently stopped in their tracks: it looked like the most effective use of a jawbreaker since Samson went out of business. But only for a day: yesterday we were back to volatility, and the markets back to nervous twitches in response to every trading order. A non-event, then? Not if you look below the surface. It tells us, for a start, a lot about the present condition of the market: it is thin. Contrary to left-wing myth, this is because there are not enough speculators. The hedge funds have taken a carping in the exchanges in the last year; by now, no one dares to run a big position. You will see why if you look up almost any exchange-rate forecast more than six months old. Sterling one of the world's strongest major currencies, and the Swiss franc one of the weakest? Ridiculous! But it happened, and the market professionals now meet Oscar Wilde's definition of a cynic: they know the price of everything, and the value of nothing.

What, for a start, is the value of the G7 communiqué? Study the wording, and only cynicism makes sense: "We believe that exchange rates should reflect economic fundamentals..." and agreed to monitor developments in exchange markets, and cooperate as appropriate. This, as Robert Brusca of Nikko points out, is pure question-begging. What is "appropriate"? The chances are, they could not agree, and that nothing has yet been done to alter the existing trends. And these trends do not at the moment reflect economic fundamentals: they reflect capital flows. The dollar is driven up by the Dow, the Yen dragged down by the Nikkei, as Japanese investors switch out of their own markets. (European rates are political — another story altogether.)

This is all very well if you trust capital markets; but as we have seen, nobody does. The Fed is worried, though

not yet panicky, about a possible financial bubble; and the Japanese are actively worried about what is becoming known as the Three Bears scenario — weak economy, weak banks and weak Nikkei leading to a real financial collapse. Their attempts to reflate the economy have failed, despite a massive devaluation, near-zero interest rates, and reckless public spending. What remains is to operate directly on the markets and the currency; and Japan has the resources to do it. The devaluation, has been achieved by enough intervention to add \$100 billion to Japan's exchange reserves. If the authorities now choose to finance the private capital outflow out of these reserves — a domestic operation, but in effect unsterilised intervention — it might do the trick. The effects cannot be limited to Japan, though. As this column has pointed out, Japanese intervention on the downside for the yen has been a major source of world liquidity; if it is now reversed, it must impose a worldwide squeeze. And if you look at it through Wall Street eyes, you will see a massive financial twist.

The Dow has been driven up partly by a major domestic switch out of bonds into equities, balanced by foreign bonds purchases as reserves rose. But a yen bale-out would work the other way, as the Bank of Japan sold short US Treasuries to provide the dollars for its domestic investors. A technicality? Not on this scale; and not if you remember that the 1987 Wall Street crash was provoked not by domestic tightening, but by a rise in German interest rates. Short-dated sales might not have any dramatic direct effect on US bonds prices. But recall what a quarter-point rise in short rates in 1994 did to the whole securities market, and you will not feel complacent for long. The G7 did not say "we believe that the major adjustment in share and bond prices is now complete"; but if they decide to back up their judgment on exchange rates with action — cooperative or not — the effect might be much the same.

WORLD COVER

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TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

[illegible]

1987	1986	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964	1963	1962	1961	1960	1959	1958	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1947	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	1940	1939	1938	1937	1936	1935	1934	1933	1932	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927	1926	1925	1924	1923	1922	1921	1920	1919	1918	1917	1916	1915	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910	1909	1908	1907	1906	1905	1904	1903	1902	1901	1900	1899	1898	1897	1896	1895	1894	1893	1892	1891	1890	1889	1888	1887	1886	1885	1884	1883	1882	1881	1880	1879	1878	1877	1876	1875	1874	1873	1872	1871	1870	1869	1868	1867	1866	1865	1864	1863	1862	1861	1860	1859	1858	1857	1856	1855	1854	1853	1852	1851	1850	1849	1848	1847	1846	1845	1844	1843	1842	1841	1840	1839	1838	1837	1836	1835	1834	1833	1832	1831	1830	1829	1828	1827	1826	1825	1824	1823	1822	1821	1820	1819	1818	1817	1816	1815	1814	1813	1812	1811	1810	1809	1808	1807	1806	1805	1804	1803	1802	1801	1800	1799	1798	1797	1796	1795	1794	1793	1792	1791	1790	1789	1788	1787	1786	1785	1784	1783	1782	1781	1780	1779	1778	1777	1776	1775	1774	1773	1772	1771	1770	1769	1768	1767	1766	1765	1764	1763	1762	1761	1760	1759	1758	1757	1756	1755	1754	1753	1752	1751	1750	1749	1748	1747	1746	1745	1744	1743	1742	1741	1740	1739	1738	1737	1736	1735	1734	1733	1732	1731	1730	1729	1728	1727	1726	1725	1724	1723	1722	1721	1720	1719	1718	1717	1716	1715	1714	1713	1712	1711	1710	1709	1708	1707	1706	1705	1704	1703	1702	1701	1700	1699	1698	1697	1696	1695	1694	1693	1692	1691	1690	1689	1688	1687	1686	1685	1684	1683	1682	1681	1680	1679	1678	1677	1676	1675	1674	1673	1672	1671	1670	1669	1668	1667	1666	1665	1664	1663	1662	1661	1660	1659	1658	1657	1656	1655	1654	1653	1652	1651	1650	1649	1648	1647	1646	1645	1644	1643	1642	1641	1640	1639	1638	1637	1636	1635	1634	1633	1632	1631	1630	1629	1628	1627	1626	1625	1624	1623	1622	1621	1620	1619	1618	1617	1616	1615	1614	1613	1612	1611	1610	1609	1608	1607	1606	1605	1604	1603	1602	1601	1600	1599	1598	1597	1596	1595	1594	1593	1592	1591	1590	1589	1588	1587	1586	1585	1584	1583	1582	1581	1580	1579	1578	1577	1576	1575	1574	1573	1572	1571	1570	1569	1568	1567	1566	1565	1564	1563	1562	1561	1560	1559	1558	1557	1556	1555	1554	1553	1552	1551	1550	1549	1548	1547	1546	1545	1544	1543	1542	1541	1540	1539	1538	1537	1536	1535	1534	1533	1532	1531	1530	1529	1528	1527	1526	1525	1524	1523	1522	1521	1520	1519	1518	1517	1516	1515	1514	1513	1512	1511	1510	1509	1508	1507	1506	1505	1504	1503	1502	1501	1500	1499	1498	1497	1496	1495	1494	1493	1492	1491	1490	1489	1488	1487	1486	1485	1484	1483	1482	1481	1480	1479	1478	1477	1476	1475	1474	1473	1472	1471	1470	1469	1468	1467	1466	1465	1464	1463	1462	1461	1460	1459	1458	1457	1456	1455	1454	1453	1452	1451	1450	1449	1448	1447	1446	1445	1444	1443	1442	1441	1440	1439	1438	1437	1436	1435	1434	1433	1432	1431	1430	1429	1428	1427	1426	1425	1424	1423	1422	1421	1420	1419	1418	1417	1416	1415	1414	1413	1412	1411	1410	1409	1408	1407	1406	1405	1404	1403	1402	1401	1400	1399	1398	1397	1396	1395	1394	1393	1392	1391	1390	1389	1388	1387	1386	1385	1384	1383	1382	1381	1380	1379	1378	1377	1376	1375	1374	1373	1372	1371	1370	1369	1368	1367	1366	1365	1364	1363	1362	1361	1360	1359	1358	1357	1356	1355	1354	1353	1352	1351	1350	1349	1348	1347	1346	1345	1344	1343	1342	1341	1340	1339	1338	1337	1336	1335	1334	1333	1332	1331	1330	1329	1328	1327	1326	1325	1324	1323	1322	1321	1320	1319	1318	1317	1316	1315	1314	1313	1312	1311	1310	1309	1308	1307	1306	1305	1304	1303	1302	1301	1300	1299	1298	1297	1296	1295	1294	1293	1292	1291	1290	1289	1288	1287	1286	1285	1284	1283	1282	1281	1280	1279	1278	1277	1276	1275	1274	1273	1272	1271	1270	1269	1268	1267	1266	1265	1264	1263	1262	1261	1260	1259	1258	1257	1256	1255	1254	1253	1252	1251	1250	1249	1248	1247	1246	1245	1244	1243	1242	1241	1240	1239	1238	1237	1236	1235	1234	1233	1232	1231	1230	1229	1228	1227	1226	1225	1224	1223	1222	1221	1220	1219	1218	1217	1216	1215	1214	1213	1212	1211	1210	1209	1208	1207	1206	1205	1204	1203	1202	1201	1200	1199	1198	1197	1196	1195	1194	1193	1192	1191	1190	1189	1188	1187	1186	1185	1184	1183	1182	1181	1180	1179	1178	1177	1176	1175	1174	1173	1172	1171	1170	1169	1168	1167	1166	1165	1164	1163	1162	1161	1160	1159	1158	1157	1156	1155	1154	1153	1152	1151	1150	1149	1148	1147	1146	1145	1144	1143	1142	1141	1140	1139	1138	1137	1136	1135	1134	1133	1132	1131	1130	1129	1128	1127	1126	1125	1124	1123	1122	1121	1120	1119	1118	1117	1116	1115	1114	1113	1112	1111	1110	1109	1108	1107	1106	1105	1104	1103	1102	1101	1100	1099	1098	1097	1096	1095	1094	1093	1092	1091	1090	1089	1088	1087	1086	1085	1084	1083	1082	1081	1080	1079	1078	1077	1076	1075	1074	1073	1072	1071	1070	1069	1068	1067	1066	1065	1064	1063	1062	1061	1060	1059	1058	1057	1056	1055	1054	1053	1052	1051	1050	1049	1048	1047	1046	1045	1044	1043	1042	1041	1040	1039	1038	1037	1036	1035	1034	1033	1032	1031	1030	1029	1028	1027	1026	1025	1024	1023	1022	1021	1020	1019	1018	1017	1016	1015	1014	1013	1012	1011	1010	1009	1008	1007	1006	1005	1004	1003	1002	1001	1000	999	998	997	996	995	994	993	992	991	990	989	988	987	986	985	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Jennai Cox on the London Legal Secretary of the Year award, which recognises the often silent fee-earners

Unsung heroines of the legal world

Reassuring homicidal clients, coping with dictation that sounds like a Japanese weightlifter ordering take-away, and finding documents in an office that resembles a stationery warehouse in a hurricane. It is all in a day's work for a legal secretary.

To give recognition and thanks to some of the most important but unsung heroines of the legal world, the London Legal Secretary of the Year award was established in 1994. Attracting more than 200 nominations from the capital's most grateful but often silent fee-earners, the award, run by London Law Appointments in

association with *The Times*, was toasting its third winner last week.

Gill Barnett, 30, team administrator and personal assistant to the senior corporate partner at Freshfields, beat seven finalists to take the prize in what the judges said was the stiffest competition to date.

Years ago, little more than fast and accurate typing and shorthand would have been required of secretaries working for law firms, but having been rigorously interviewed and tested twice by Sarah Singer of London Law Appointments, the finalists were then invited to London's Café Royal where, in front of an

audience of hundreds, they had to respond to three situation questions and read a speech on a work-related topic of their choice.

This very public demonstration of their poise, professionalism, confidence, communications skills and sense of humour is an illustration of the much-changed demands of legal staff. The judges were also asked to look for loyalty, organisation, administration skills and initiative.

"These women have to be highly able," Ms Singer, organiser of the competition, says. "They often work for more than one fee-earner, each of whom will have a number

of cases going simultaneously. Legal secretaries have to be very good jugglers."

A defining characteristic of all finalists was their loyalty, Ms Singer says. Most had been with their employers for more than five years. As the demands on support staff have increased, good all-round legal secretaries have become more scarce. Law firms are rewarding those they value in the hope they will not be tempted to leave. Ms Singer sees fewer discontented secretaries now than three years ago and those she does see are of a very high standard.

Donna Berry, one of the judges and personnel manager at Wilde Sapte, says: "The getting and keeping of clients is all-important. Business no longer comes automatically. Law today is very competitive, so image is far more important. Legal secretaries have to be aware of the part they play in getting business. They need to be the type who will walk the extra mile."

Wilde Sapte is now far more careful with support staff recruitment, says Ms Berry. The firm looks for candidates who are a "cut above". "It is about time expectations of secretaries were high. Salaries have always been good in this field and now they really are earn-

ing their money," she says.

Winner Gill Barnett's speech about the transition with her boss at Freshfields to the Lloyd's building to manage the legal aspects of the Lloyd's rescue plan last year, made this clear.

Ms Barnett, who said receiving the award was like "winning an Oscar", described her role as the first port of call for Lloyd's people chasing Freshfields and Freshfields people chasing her boss, Barry O'Brien. "Everybody wanted an answer and everybody wanted that answer yesterday," she says.

Her boss said that while doing the most demanding and difficult and challenging job any legal secretary is ever likely to encounter Ms Barnett "worked day night and weekends with great humour and commitment".

Caroline Rogers, 28, who came second, spoke about the training programme for litigation secretaries that she had devised and implemented and which helped her firm, Warner Cranston, to win an award for training. She achieved this, according to partner Michael Jones, by taking work home and refusing overtime payments.

In third place, Tammy Wilcott, 42, PA to a partner in the property department of Clifford Chance, chose a subject touched on by all finalists: the threat to their jobs from technology.

While the demand for quality legal secretaries may outstrip supply, the computer revolution threatens any future demand for them at all. But the seven women all saw this contradiction as an opportunity to develop. "Dealing with an increased number of administrative and practical aspects means we can get to know more about the deals and the key people involved," Ms Wilcott says.

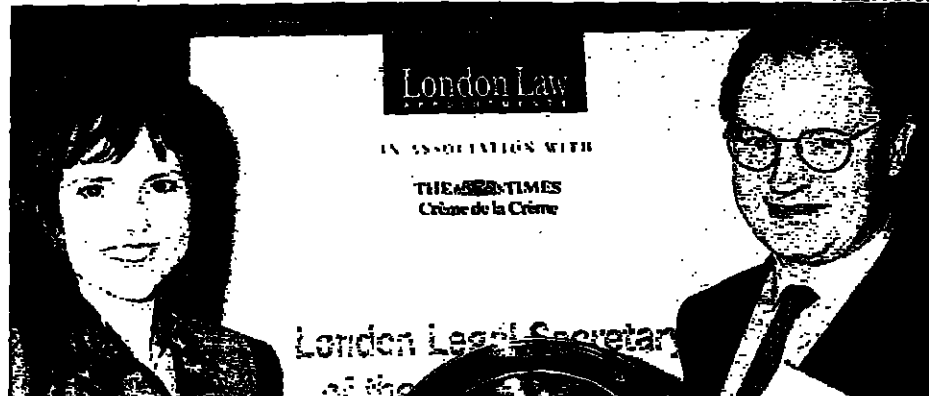
As technology has helped to reduce the traditional secretarial role, so the demands on law firms have increased. Many now increasingly rely on their support staff to deal with matters that require no specialist legal knowledge.

"It is only now," says Kerry Shenton, 27, another finalist who works at D J Freeman, "that they are starting to realise how valuable we are and how much they can get out of us. You are expected to take on responsibility and the bigger firms will let you."

Michael Hatchwell, a partner with Davenport Lyons and one of the competition's two



Gill Barnett: the London Legal Secretary of the Year



The winner, Gill Barnett and her boss at Freshfields, Barry O'Brien

male judges, says: "Their commitment was excellent. People who can present themselves well demonstrate that they are bright, quick-thinking and not phased by the unexpected. It shows a certain maturity."

The attitudes associated with the word "secretary" are dying out, Mr Hatchwell says. Even Law Society courses now

include sections which make trainee solicitors aware of how to make good use of support staff. But the really clever secretaries know that some skills will never date.

As Gill Barnett's winning speech ended: "The hallmark of a good secretary is letting the boss believe he is in charge."

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Restricted policing decision reasonable

Regina v Chief Constable of Sussex, Ex parte International Traders Ferry Ltd

Before Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Swinton Thomas

[Judgment January 28]

A chief constable's decision to restrict policing on only two days a week to protect the transport of livestock to a port where animal rights protesters were demonstrating was reasonable under domestic and European law because of restraints on resources.

The Court of Appeal held in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by the Chief Constable of Sussex against the decision of the Queen's Bench Divisional Court (Lord Justice Balcombe and Mr Justice Popplewell) (*The Times* July 31, 1995; [1996] QB 97) allowing an application for judicial review by International Traders Ferry Ltd (ITF) of a decision of the chief constable on April 10, 1995 to provide no policing with effect from April 24 to protect the transport of livestock to the port of Shoreham for shipment to France save on two consecutive days a week or four consecutive days a fortnight and a decision of April 24, 1995 refusing to change the earlier decision or delay its implementation.

Article 34 of the EC Treaty provides: "(1) Quantitative restrictions on exports, and all measures having equivalent effect, shall be prohibited between member states."

Article 36 provides that the provisions of article 34 "shall not preclude prohibitions or restrictions on... exports... justified on grounds of public policy."

Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC and Mr Adam Lewis for the chief constable, Mr Peter Roth and Mr Rhodri Thompson for ITF.

LORD JUSTICE KENNEDY

said that the case concerned the extent of police protection for the customers of ITF, a company involved in the export of livestock through the port of Shoreham, during the early months of 1995 when animal rights protesters were trying to stop the trade.

The Divisional Court had rejected the domestic law challenge to the decision of the chief constable but had held that the decisions, under challenge, although not themselves amounting to quantitative restrictions on exports within article 34 of the EC Treaty, were measures having equivalent effect and were therefore prohibited unless they could be justified by article 36.

In the opinion of the Divisional Court the first step which the chief constable had to take if he was to establish his defence was to prove that the resources available to him were inadequate to enable him to provide the level of policing which would enable the lorries to get through to the port on a regular basis and that he had failed to do so.

His decision turned on the failure of the chief constable to require the police authority to make an approach to the Home Office for additional funding which it was clear had no real prospects of success.

Were the decisions unreasonable?

ITF argued that it was conducting a lawful trade which animal rights protesters acting illegally were attempting to stop. ITF accepted that the chief constable was entitled to decide how to deploy his resources, but contended that the chief constable's duty was to keep the peace and uphold the law, and that the decision constituted an abrogation of that responsibility.

In his Lordship's judgment, that approach failed to pay proper regard to the undeniable fact that the manpower and fiscal resources available to the chief constable were finite.

He had concluded that: (i) with the resources then available to him he could no longer but provide effective policing throughout his police area and escort lorries for ITF on five days a week and (ii) he had no realistic prospect of obtaining significant extra resources.

On the evidence a chief constable had acted proportionately, and in answering that question the authorities showed that the courts had to grant to the chief constable, as the person charged with the responsibility of making decisions, a margin of appreciation.

The chief constable had to balance at least three competing rights and interests, namely: (i) ITF's right to protection for its lawful economic activity; (ii) the right of the residents of Sussex to protection from crime and disorder; and (iii) the right of animal rights protesters to protest peacefully, but not illegally.

With unlimited resources, manpower and finance, there would be no competition between the rights which the court did not consider evidence in order to be satisfied that the resources were not infinite. If a balance had to be struck it almost inevitably followed that no one right or interest could be regarded as absolute.

The chief constable clearly did strike a balance, and it was European law as well as domestic law that no court would interfere with his decision unless it could be shown that he was plainly wrong.

The decisions being challenged were not made primarily to lighten the administration's burden or to reduce public expenditure. They were made to make the best use of available resources, but in any event, when it was abundantly clear that such an approach would not have

met with a favourable response.

The chief constable was not only entitled, but in fact obliged, to use his available resources to police as well as he could the area for which he was responsible. If that was his aim then it must be an aim countenanced by article 36, because proper policing was obviously public policy.

So the only remaining question was whether in pursuit of an accepted aim the chief constable had acted proportionately, and in answering that question the authorities showed that the courts had to grant to the chief constable, as the person charged with the responsibility of making decisions, a margin of appreciation.

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Effect of plaintiff's delay on co-defendants

Kincaid Fisheries Ltd v Sunderland Marine Mutual Insurance Ltd and Another

Before Mr Justice Colman

[Judgment January 21]

Where co-defendants had suffered overlapping periods of delay which might have caused each a unique prejudice, each of them, in his application to strike out the claim, could rely on any period of delay, in relation to that co-defendant, the plaintiff had acted without the delay in dispatch which could normally be expected in the claim being pursued.

In determining whether such delay might be found excusable in the case of a particular co-defendant, all co-defendants' relationships with the plaintiff were relevant as a whole and where the delay affecting one co-defendant was excusable it would normally be excusable where it affected the others.

In determining whether a particular co-defendant had been prejudiced his case was to be treated separately.

Landlord's invalid notice made effective by tenant

Keepers and Governors of the Free Grammar School of John Lyon v Mayhew

Before Lord Justice Goff, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Swinton Thomas

[Judgment January 21]

Although a landlord's notice to terminate a tenancy, under section 25 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, did not have effect for failure to contain words in it informing the tenant of the landlord's rights under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 the tenant's subsequent action, amounting to a representation that the validity of the notice was not being disputed, rendered the notice effective.

The Court of Appeal (Lord Justice Leggatt, Lord Justice Goff and Lord Justice Millett) allowed an appeal by the tenant against a decision of the Queen's Bench Divisional Court (Lord Justice Goff and Mr Justice Nourse) (*The Times* January 12, 1997; [1997] 1 All ER 1000) that the notice was invalid.

Onus on applicant for access order

S v M (Minor: Access order)

Before Lord Goff of Chieveley, Lord Mustill, Lord Slynn of Hadley, Lord Hope of Craighead and Lord Clyde

[Speeches February 6]

When a court was considering whether to make an access order under section 3(2) of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986 the onus was on the party seeking the order to show that it would be in the child's best interests. There was no presumption that the link between a child and his natural parents was so important that the court must always seek to preserve it unless there were strong reasons to the contrary.

Mr A. R. Hardie, QC, Dean of Faculty, and Mrs J. J. M. Scott for the father, Mr Colin J. M. Sutherland, QC and Mrs Ross Crawford for the mother.

LORD HOPE said that when the case had come before the sheriff the father had already been the father in fact. After the last visit the child had told his mother and two others that his father had hit him.

The Dean of Faculty had argued that since the child's statement had been inadmissible as evidence of the truth of their contents, they should have been disregarded entirely by the courts below.

But the fact that the statements could not have been used to establish the truth of their contents did not mean that they were of no value as evidence. They were an indication of the child's state of mind.

There was no rule of law which prevented a judge from taking such statements into account along with other evidence of the child's behaviour, when forming a view as to whether it was in the best interests of the child that access should continue.

The principal issue related to the nature of the welfare test in section 3(2).

That section had been repealed and the factors to which the court had to have regard in considering whether to make an order relating to parental responsibilities and rights were those set out in section 11(7) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

No submissions had been made about the effect, if any, of the difference in wording between the provisions of sections 3(2) and 11(7) so it would not be right for his Lordship to express any view on the point.

Limit to jurisdiction of Pensions Ombudsman

Westminster City Council v Haywood and Another

Before Lord Justice Kennedy, Lord Justice Millett and Lord Justice Swinton Thomas

[Judgment January 28]

The Pensions Ombudsman had no jurisdiction to investigate a complaint concerning a severance and compensation scheme by a former employee who was not in pensionable service under that scheme, although he was in pensionable service under the employer's superannuation fund.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by Westminster City Council against the decision of Mr Justice Robert Walker in the Chancery Division (*The Times* March 12, 1996; [1996] 3 WLR 502) upholding a decision of the Pensions Ombudsman dated July 25, 1995 directing the council to pay Jeffrey James Haywood £10,000 compensation for distress and inconvenience following a reduction in his pension payments 10 months after he was made voluntarily redundant.

A cross-appeal against the judge's decision to overturn the ombudsman's direction that the council should maintain the payment to what they would have been, had they not been reduced and to pay back with interest such reductions was dismissed.

On April 12, 1992, Mr Haywood was made redundant, which qualified him for a lump sum under the Greater London Council (General Powers) Act 1968. By virtue of both, he received lump sums and in addition (a) an annual retirement pension under the 1972 Act and (b) a compensation amount under the compensation scheme.

Subsequently a council resolution was passed which provided that the lump sum was to be paid in excess of their power and accordingly, from February 1993, they reduced his compensation scheme payments by £1,994.17 a year.

Mr Haywood complained to the Pensions Ombudsman, alleging that at the time he was made redundant the council misled him about his pension entitlement.

Miss Elizabeth Slade, QC and Mr Charles Bear for the council; Mr Andrew Arden, QC and Mr Jonathan Manning for the Pensions Ombudsman; Mr Haywood was represented by Mr S. A. Ogden, Mr W. J. Baxby and Mr G. J. Baxby.

LORD JUSTICE MILETT said that the first issue was whether the ombudsman had had jurisdiction to entertain the complaint, seeing that the only payments to Mr Haywood which were reduced, and the subject-matter of the only possible misstatement or maladministration, were payments under the council's severance and compensation scheme and not payments out of the superannuation fund.

Under the Pensions Schemes Act 1993 the ombudsman had jurisdiction to investigate and determine any complaint made to him by "an authorised complainant" being a person who was or had been "in pensionable service" under the employer's superannuation fund.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing an appeal by Westminster City Council against the decision of Mr Justice Robert Walker in the Chancery Division (*The Times* March 12, 1996; [1996] 3 WLR 502) upholding a decision of the Pensions Ombudsman dated July 25, 1995 directing the council to pay Jeffrey James Haywood £10,000 compensation for distress and inconvenience following a reduction in his pension payments 10 months after he was made voluntarily redundant.

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Scots Law Report February 12 1997 House of Lords

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The House of Lords so held in affirming an order of an Extra Division of the Inner House of the Court of Session (Lord Weir and Lord Brand).

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LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF

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LITERATURE

Each morning Stephen Blanchard rises early to deliver letters. Then he goes home to write books

MUSIC 1

Ireland's National Symphony Orchestra is heading for London, for the first time in 15 years

THE TIMES ARTS

MUSIC 2

The OAE marks the Brahms centenary in period style. But would the composer himself have recognised it?

RISING STAR

Violinist Clio Gould loves new music, prides herself on her versatility — and plays a Strad

A postie and a man of letters

Jason Cowley talks to rising novelist Stephen Blanchard about life on a delivery round and 'writing a bit'

Each morning Stephen Blanchard rises early — not to write but to deliver letters. He returns home from Clapham sorting office in the middle of the afternoon, spends a couple of hours with his children, then sits in front of a battered Amstrad working on his remarkable, clear-eyed novels. Money is tight and he is continually exhausted. And yet, after years of drift, working as a postman has brought him stability.

"I took the job shortly after turning 40," Blanchard says. "I realised I was wasting my time. It provides me with a routine, purpose and gives me time to write. I'm quite good at it, too."

Blanchard may be a competent postman but writing is what he does best. It is hard to think of a more subtle, original contemporary novel than *Gagarin & I*, his exceptionally well-received debut. His new book, *Wilson's Island*, is similarly unusual: set in an unnamed town of derelict buildings, junk shops and seamy amusement arcades, it tells of itinerant drifter Ralph Orr's homecoming after an unexplained absence of four years. The narrative moves with languorous slowness. There are disturbing reverberations and menacing evasions. Not much happens: Ralph re-encounters and betrays his father, makes some money playing in fixed darts matches and fails to recognise his neglected son.

As with *Gagarin & I*, the appeal of the book lies not in its plot but in its language. Blanchard is a meticulous stylist. Meaning is com-

pressed in dense layers of description (Joseph Conrad is an influence). He chisels a gothic poetry from the wood of the ordinary. His aural sensitivity fills his novels with the "petrol-starved sob of engines" and the "rubberised sigh of brakes".

What interests Blanchard is "describing how things really look or sound. How you render faithfully the slamming of a car door or a puddle of water as it catches the light. I love the sound of a dart as it pings against wire, or a reflection cast by a mirror."

Blanchard is aware that by writing about darts he is mirroring the same ground as Martin Amis, whose most memorable creation, Keith Talent, was a keen darts man. "Amis didn't treat darts with enough respect," he says. "He appears to adopt a contemptuous attitude to anyone who is not part of the metropolitan intelligentsia. So he put me to restore the dignity of darts and those who play it."

Like Leonard, the young narrator of *Gagarin & I*, Blanchard was brought up by his mother and spinster aunt in a tall, narrow boarding house in Hull. His father left almost as soon as he was born; absent parents recur in his work. Blanchard moved to London when he was 20. He lived in squats and bedsits, working progressively as a labourer, carpenter and junk-shop proprietor. With his lank hair and tatty clothes, he looks like a man who is used to working outside.

Until recently, he wrote only in stolen moments: short stories, prose fragments, novels begun but



Stamp of approval: Stephen Blanchard is happy in his post office job — "It provides me with a routine, purpose and gives me time to write. I'm quite good at it, too"

never completed. He never believed in himself or in his work; he describes himself as "someone who writes a bit" rather than as a writer. A lack of self-belief underpins his hesitant, murmured conversation. He seldom completes sentences. It is hard to believe that anyone so verbally inarticulate can produce such confident, technically accomplished novels.

His partner, Sarah, whom he met at a writers' group in Clapham, recalls the first time she heard him read one of his stories: "My first impression of Steve was 'that he spoke so little. At the time, he was writing short poems. Then he started doing short stories and had

to read them out to the group. I was amazed when this incredibly structured flow of words came out. That's when I first became interested in him."

When the couple first met, Sarah, who had published numerous short stories, was the more successful writer. With two young children, though, she now struggles to find time to write seriously. "I suppose we are a bit like the figures on a weather-vane," Blanchard says. "When we met, I was in and she was out but now it's the other way round. Perhaps, in the end, she'll succeed and I'll disappear." That seems unlikely, however. For there is something mysterious

and unaccountable in Blanchard's style that makes his books hard to forget. *Gagarin & I*, for instance, spotlights young Leonard's obsession with the space race. He is suffering from a rare, painless wasting disease and dreams of jettisoning his body, floating as weightlessly as his hero, Yuri Gagarin. His mother and her sister, whose conversation Leonard monitors with hilarious exactitude, are convinced he will get better. But Leonard knows he will die, having seen, in a dream or vision, his hometown as it might look in the future. The experience disorients him: "I had a feeling of looking at things after my own life

had gone by. My mouth held the powdery taste of non-existence." Blanchard's work abounds in such moments of clairvoyance, the self-teetering on the edge of dissolution, as if drugged. In *Wilson's Island*, an old man is visited by his last wife as he struggles for breath after collapsing in a pub. Again, you are never quite sure if he is sick or if he has actually seen his wife. Blanchard denies an interest in mysticism but admits to slipping occasionally into what he calls "blank spaces". "I remember once, on my round, disappearing into a void. When I came to my senses, I was automatically shovelling let-

ters through the door of a flat. It was frightening; I had no idea if I'd been there for two seconds or for two hours."

Blanchard is completing a third novel, *The Paraffin Child*, but has no plans to stop working. He may earn only £12,000 a year but writing pays substantially less: his advance for *Gagarin & I* was a scandalous £2,500; he received "not much more" for the second book. For now, despite his exhaustion, he is happy being a "postman who writes a bit". Of course, he is more than that: a novelist who happens to deliver letters.

● *Wilson's Island* is published by Chatto & Windus at £9.99

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC: 'Authentic' Brahms in London; a Markevitch revival in Birmingham; and a reborn Irish orchestra preparing to tour Britain

No sliding place

OAE/Wel
Queen Elizabeth Hall

"authentic" Brahms is that the old boy lived almost into the gramophone era. While we have no recordings of him conducting, we have quite a few made by early 20th-century maestros who knew exactly what authentic Brahms was like when he had heard him do it. Listening to their interpretations, one is struck by two overwhelming traits that have vanished from modern performance. The first is portamento: strings sliding regularly between notes. The second is a cavalier variation in speed, almost from bar to bar.

To say that the OAE strings played with no portamento is not quite true. The cellos managed a tentative slither or two in the Second Symphony's Adagio. But it was negligible. This might as well have been the LSO strings — except that they are far more secure in technique.

So, too, with the speed question. Far from being more flexible than usual, the conductor Bruno Weil crushed too many changes in mood beneath an inexorable tread. He did whip up the fast movements, particularly the Fourth Symphony's Scherzo, where we also enjoyed the tinkle of an "authentic" triangle. But the Second Symphony's lyrical pleasures were noddled through in prosaic fashion.

Of course the OAE, like other period-instrument bands, made its name by stripping Baroque and Classical music of spurious Romanticism. Unfortunately, you cannot apply that ascetic wash-and-brush-up method to Romantic music itself. There was no discernible performing philosophy at work here. And, more mundanely, there were too many fluffed notes — more, one feels, than "Brahms's familiar orchestras" (ie, the Vienna Philharmonic) would have tolerated.

RICHARD MORRISON

IT WAS generous of Yakov Kreizberg and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra to devote a significant proportion of a pair of concerts they are giving in Symphony Hall to the music of Igor Markevitch — a musician remembered by few of the present-day audience, even for his conducting, which is what he did best.

A boy prodigy tutored by Nadia Boulanger and indulged by Cocteau and Diaghilev, Markevitch exhausted his creativity before he was 30. "If I had gone on composing," he once said, "I would probably have died of hunger."

But that is not why composers as favourably placed in the musical world as he was both before and after the Second World War stop writing music. It is basically a matter of talent and, as the performance of *Leaves* confirmed, he had little of it. For all its originality in the use of percussion and for all its rhythmic potential as a ballet score, it doesn't sound good in the concert hall. It is a continuing struggle with recalcitrant material illuminated by just one

Goodness gracious

Bournemouth SO/
Kreizberg
Birmingham

inspired episode — the desolate, windswept discovery of Icarus's wings after his fall — before it reverts once more to echoing *The Rite of Spring*.

In a concert with two hours still to go, however, the 25 minutes of Markevitch were a very acceptable bonus. Either of the two following items would have been enough to make the evening thoroughly worthwhile. Mitsuko Uchida joined Kreizberg and the BSO in a performance of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto which was not only handsomely stylish but also profoundly intense in emotional commitment. The first-movement cadenza, by far the longest of the composer's three alternatives, was a display not so much of virtuosity as of sensitivity to its extradi-

nary harmonic implications. Just as impressive, in its more demonstrative way, was Kreizberg's interpretation of Rachmaninov's Second Symphony. It is remarkable enough that in the short time he has been with the BSO he has been able to develop a sound luxuriant enough to

sustain a score like that. It is even more remarkable that he was able to control its vast structure so effortlessly, powering its climaxes with every appearance of spontaneity while profiling them exactly according to the long-term economy, and retaining the freshness of the orchestral responses to the end of a long and demanding evening.

GERALD LARNER

LONDON
Royal Opera House
Feb 15, 19 (6pm)
TO COMMEMORATE the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Covent Garden Opera Company, the Royal Opera is presenting Hans Pfitzner's controversial epic, *Palestrina*. Featuring Thomas Moser in the title role, the opera is an extended hymn to the healing power of music and, in *Missa Papae Marcelli*, contains some of the most beautiful writing in the 20th-century operatic repertoire. Theatre Club members can buy two orchestra stalls seats for the price of one (normally £121 to £132). Tel 0171-304 4000, quoting "STIC" and your membership number.

Vaudeville Theatre
Feb 19-20, 24-25
● A FUNNY and moving evening, *Women on the Verge of FRT* is a must for anyone who enjoyed *Shirley Valentine*. During the previews, members can buy two £20 tickets for the price of one. Tel 0171-494 9987

Gielgud Theatre
March 4-May 10
● STARRING Caroline O'Connor, Mark Adams and Linzi Hatley, *Romance* is an enchanting musical. With their £50 tickets, club members will receive two £25 gift vouchers as well as a voucher for a complimentary half-bottle of champagne during the interval. Tel 0171-494 5531

THE THEATRE CLUB

● SEE the new musical stage adaptation of the children's classic *The Secret Garden* at:

NORWICH Theatre
Royal, Feb 19-21 (2pm, 7pm). 20 per cent off tickets (normally £5.50 to £7.50). Tel 01603 633000

HULL New Theatre, Feb 26-28 (7pm). 20 per cent off tickets (normally £6.50 to £9.50). Tel 01482 226655

DARLINGTON Civic Theatre, March 5-7 (2pm, 7pm). Tickets £5 (normally £6.50 to £9.50). Tel 01325 486555

WOLVERHAMPTON Grand Theatre, March 19-21 (7.30pm). Save £2 on tickets (normally £4.50 to £8.50). Tel 01902 29212

EDINBURGH King's Theatre, March 26-28 (2.30pm, 7.30pm). 20 per cent off £8 tickets. Tel 0131-220 4349

WORKING New Victoria Theatre, April 2-4 (2.30pm, 7.30pm). Save £2 on adult tickets only (normally £8.50 to £9.50). Tel 01483 761144

TO JOIN the Theatre Club either send a cheque for £12.50, made payable to The Theatre Club, together with your name, address and telephone number to The Theatre Club, P.O. Box 2164, Colchester CO2 8TL, or telephone 01206 225145 using your credit card. Please allow 28 days for delivery of your membership pack. For general inquiries call 0171-387 9873

Here come Dublin's finest

I had been away from Dublin too long. "Well, shame on you now! Well, shame on you now!" The rebuke which hit me the minute I landed referred not to the glossy new pedestrianisation of Grafton Street, the sandblasting of Trinity College, the new handy bus to the Guinness brewery. What I had been missing was nothing less than the rebirth of the RTE Orchestra, now reincarnated as the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, and all set to make Britain's storm in a Four Cities Tour which starts on home ground on Friday and reaches London next Tuesday.

The orchestra draws its new sense of identity, bravado even, partly from the very air it breathes in a reanimated Dublin; partly from the concentration of its musical activity in the refurbished National Concert Hall; but above all from the appointment, three years ago, of Kasper de Roo as principal conductor.

But the Dutch de Roo — who claims, strangely enough, to have felt at home the minute his feet touched Irish soil — has the measure of his maverick crew. "On my first ever visit in 1981 I felt the orchestra were so lively, so energetic. They were having fun!" De Roo picked up on the volatility and exploited its positive qualities — because I, too, like to improvise — both in rehearsal and in performance. I may have a different approach, a different feeling on each new day. They recognise this, and enjoy it.

De Roo has been working calmly on the orchestra as a band of lively individuals, coaxing them into closer listening, more concentrated ensemble, more exacting articulation. "I'd programme works for strings only. Then something like Stravinsky's Piano Concerto which is only for wind." And he exploited their strengths — their exuberance, their quick uptake, their love of colour — by focusing on 20th-century classics such as Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* and Stravinsky's *Firebird*.



Kasper de Roo with some members of the orchestra

which they bring on tour. The orchestra has two weak links. One is a grave lack of educational work. Feeding from the roots is not yet seen as the priority it is with its British counterparts, and the lack of a workable infrastructure in Ireland's own educational system (many schools have no music provision what-

soever) adds to a vicious and unproductive circle.

The other is at the classical core: nobody has spent serious time with the players working on the 18th-century repertoire which must be an orchestra's prime nourishment. And it does show. But for the time being, de Roo's stability and sharp eye for detail is fruitfully complemented by the musically more expansive character of its principal guest conductor, Alexander Anissimov, who revels in the 19th-century Romantics.

In addition to 50 Dublin concerts a year, most of which are broadcast live, the NSOI now makes two national tours annually. The scope seems endless, and the future of the NSOI more challenging than ever.

HILARY FINCH

● The NSOI plays Fri (8pm) in Dublin's National Concert Hall (00 353 1 671 1533); Sat (7.30pm) at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre (0131-529 6000); Mon (7.30pm) at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall (0141-353 4134); Tues (7.30pm) at the Festival Hall (0171-960 4242)

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

CLIO GOULD

Age: 28

Profession: Violinist. "But at the moment I'm having trouble defining what I do. It may be chamber music one week, directing my conductorless ensemble the next, guest leading a symphony orchestra, then solo work. It's a very exciting blend."

Does versatility count? "It's the new thing, we take a much more active role in the whole musical picture. Gone are the days of a soloist sitting there practising, getting out their long dress, going on to play the Bruch or Mendelssohn concertos." Well, some still do, but Gould is one of the most enterprising players around.

Where can we hear her? This weekend, as principal violinist of the London Sinfonietta in the State of the Nation festival on the South Bank. Otherwise, as artistic director of the BT Scottish Ensemble, as a soloist throughout Britain and Europe, and in a series of recordings due from a new label called Voyager.

Background: A Londoner, Gould began violin lessons at three and was playing quartets at seven. She made her Festival Hall debut at 17 in a Music for Youth gala.

A prodigy? "No, but when I finished school I realised I couldn't imagine not being a musician. In fact I've never wanted to play any other instrument." She went to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, then to postgraduate studies in Switzerland.

Current passion: New music. "I've been fascinated by it since college. Things are never static, they never can be. I'm really proud of what's happening in British music. There are many envious people in other countries."

Which composers has she most enjoyed working with? "John Adams is such a honey, he's so modest. After we did his *Road Movies* piece, he came up and said, 'Thank you, I thought I'd written a dog!' John Tavener wrote *Tears of the Angels* for me and the Ensemble. It's ethereal beyond belief, and it was the first concert I ever did on the Strad."

The Strad? "It's from 1694, and I just love and respect it. I was incredibly lucky to be lent it. It's changed my playing."

JOHN ALLISON

■ VISUAL ART

Lord Alexander of Weedon unveils a new art gallery for the British public, courtesy of NatWest

■ THEATRE 1

It's a case of style over substance when Glasgow stages Wycherley's 17th-century romp *The Country Wife*

THE TIMES ARTS

■ THEATRE 2

The Royal Court's new *Backpay*, set in post-independence Soweto, doesn't rise to the mark as a stage work

■ TOMORROW

Kenneth Branagh brings his *Hamlet* to the big screen, all four hours of it. Read Geoff Brown's verdict

Today the NatWest opens its art collection to the public. The bank's chairman explains the move to Isabel Carlisle

Mammon earns some credit

The patronage of the arts by banking houses had its heyday in Renaissance Italy but has been continuing more or less unobtrusively ever since. Major corporations with headquarters in London, such as Glaxo, BP and Guinness, all have art collections on display in their buildings. The public very rarely lays eyes on them, however, which makes today's opening by NatWest of an art gallery to show its collection the more unusual.

Artists need to have a reverence for the past

Lord Alexander of Weedon, who has been chairman of the NatWest Group since 1989, is the motivating force behind the gallery. In the past seven years he has also steered NatWest into buying works by young, relatively unknown British artists and into founding the NatWest Art Prize. Now in its sixth year, and with a first prize of £26,000, it is for artists in this country under 35.

In talking about the gallery, Alexander is at pains to point out that credit also goes to David Edmonds, head of group services, who has been exploring ways of regenerating NatWest's City properties, and to Rosemary Harris, who was taken on as the first full-time curator of the collection in December 1995. The pair have overseen the transformation of the Neo-Classical banking hall at 41 Lothbury, which opened in 1932 as the headquarters of Westminster Bank Ltd.

The 7,000 sq ft of the hall has been emptied of the clutter of 1970s

architectural infill and taken back to its original appearance. There is a new wooden floor, but the original polished marble columns rise two storeys to support the ceiling with its glazed skylight. Sturdy screens, as solid as a wall when fixed but able to be moved to different anchor points in the floor, hold a selection of paintings from the NatWest Group's collection of mainly postwar British art.

Grouped in this show into still life, figurative, landscape and abstraction, they include John Bellamy's *Three Birds of Paradise*, John Wonnacott's *Estuary: the Goat, Albert* and *Irvin's San Giorgio* and Mary Fedden's *Starfish*.

This is not the cutting edge. "In your face" art of the Turner Prize, although Calum Innes, nominated in 1995, is here with a cadmium-orange abstract. "Our art is meant to be approachable — pleasing, uplifting, thought-provoking. Some works are stimulating, some peaceful in their colours," Alexander says.

The NatWest Art Prize has been seen as a rearguard action against the neo-conceptualism that has given contemporary art a bad name in more traditional circles. "We are keen to encourage artists who have shown they have mastered both line and colour, although the final work may be abstract. There is a need for artists to have a reverence for the past."

Could the collection be seen as a counterblast to, for instance, the Saatchi collection? "We aren't competing with anyone but helping to



The healing arts on show: Lord Alexander of Weedon believes that "involvement in the arts promotes the healthy society that should be at the heart of all businesses"

offer the maximum access to art to allow people to form their own views. The important thing is accessibility," Alexander is a former trustee of the National Gallery and strongly supports the principle of free entry to museums. "We are making our collection available in the same spirit," he says. "When life is so hectic, it is good to have a painting on the wall which has other values." Entrance to the Lothbury Gallery is free.

NatWest hope for on this public-spirited enterprise? The amount of money spent by the group each year on buying new art (£25,000) and funding the NatWest Art Prize (£100,000) is not insignificant. However, "we don't see the paintings as an investment," Alexander says. "We buy them because we like the work and want to encourage young artists. Painters such as Isabel Myerscough, Alison Watt and Justin Mortimer are making good now and there is a sense of

excitement for having encouraged them when they were starting out." This is a very practical form of patronage and Alexander makes the point that "everyone is having to adjust in the context of the National Lottery and its awards to the arts. We are reluctant to engage in capital building projects and keen on ongoing, participative activities." Having a community policy is also important. "Involvement in the arts promotes the healthy society that should be at the

heart of all businesses," he says. "There is a real thirst in this country for the arts. Of the 24 million overseas visitors to Britain in 1995, more than 60 per cent gave the arts as a reason for coming. That makes the arts a very attractive area of sponsorship."

The opening hours of the gallery, from 10am to 4pm Mondays to Fridays, means that the gallery will mainly be visited by City workers, although Alexander hopes that visitors to the City will also drop in.

The exhibitions will change every few months, focusing perhaps on an individual artist, or launching a young artist who could not afford a dealer's show. The next exhibition, following *The Subjects of Art*, will be of the winners of the 1997 NatWest Art Prize, to be announced on May 13.

● The Subjects of Art is at the Lothbury Gallery (01753 6642) until early May. The exhibition of work by the winners of the 1997 NatWest Art Prize runs from May 14 to June 11.

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THE TIMES

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Tashkent	£2,703	£599
Warsaw	£570	£339
Zagreb	£732	£309

CHANGING TIMES

Passion with all the lights off

Love and marriage have always been strange bedfellows. Indeed, once the honeymoon is over, separate beds have often been the order of the night. The merry-go-round of serial adultery that follows is the only thing that keeps any sexual spark alive

The Country Wife Citizens, Glasgow

and the whole thing becomes an elaborate game of kiss and tell.

No play captures the thrill of the chase quite like Wycherley's 17th-century romp, which sees Horner and Pinchwife, a pair of clapped-out cuckolds, against each other to win the hand and other things of the reformed Pinchwife's bride, a naive but lusty lass locked away from prying eyes.

Horner masquerades as a eunuch to gain easy access to the women's pleasures without enraging the wrath of their husbands, thus satisfying his needs without besmirching frustrated suburban reputations. Plots are hatched and favours gained, and the ultimate prize awaits.

At the Citizens, director



Patricia Clare, Henry Ian Cusick and Siobhan Stanley in a scene Wycherley would not recognise

Antony McDonald does away with period periwigs in favour of leather in a production where the Look is all. The initial shock of its vivid pink backdrop and angled screens soon fades, though, and seems out of date within seconds, like a big 1980s shop window.

What follows attempts to keep the energy up, but all passion is very quickly spent, and we are left with a piece that tries so hard to be sexy it never going to score, and just winds up looking silly instead.

To be fair, by doing away

with the froth which usually swamps the play, McDonald seems to be attempting to make some serious points about who really holds sway in the sex wars. Post-feminist he undoubtedly is: he even has the female characters listed as "Ms" in the programme.

But he ends up making unnecessarily heavy weather of things, concentrating on sex as in "and violence", and leaving out the laughs. Only Henry Ian Cusick as Horner and a smouldering Siobhan Stanley come close to making

it real. Most appear to be faking it. It is perhaps telling that McDonald is responsible for design as well as direction. Asides are spoken into twin microphones, which dangle limply either side of the stage, marrying the trappings of performance art with the visual flamboyance of opera, but taking them nowhere. Like a well-practised but empty chat-up line, this is a triumph of style over substance.

NEIL COOPER

Two for the future, if not the present

DID you know that the Royal Court has 60 dramatists under commission? Or that it expects this year to present 20 or more? With an output like that, there are bound to be occasions when the theatre promotes its young hopefuls too fast, too soon. That is, I fear, the case with the dramatists it is presenting in the two makeshift auditoriums in the two makeshift auditoriums of the old Ambassadors. Both are women, both are twenty-something, both are talented, both have much to learn.

Tamara Hammerschlag's *Backpay* is set in her native South Africa and strikes me as more interesting as a phenomenon than as a play. There must be plenty of young whites ineptly trying to prove their post-apartheid credentials, and lots of articulate young blacks mistrustfully circling them. In somewhat the way she describes. What does a 20-year-old feel when she goes to post-independence Soweto to make contact with the nanny her mother treated so disdainfully all those years ago? How do the old lady's children feel about her? The trouble is that, with one exception,

Backpay/Cockroach Who? Ambassadors

the characterisation does not rise to the dramatic occasion. Nor does the dialogue. Hammerschlag's folk quarrel, form wary bonds, quarrel some more and, with the help of a carefully contrived pregnancy, achieve a provisional and presumably emblematic understanding across the racial chasm. But only when Dona Croll's retired nanny was chortling or raging or bulldozing round the stage did I feel I was watching a full-blooded person rather than a series of nervously engineered attitudes.

Hammerschlag will write a better play, as will Jess Walters, British author of *Cockroach Who?* Her trouble is almost the opposite. Her dialogue and her characterisation leave you in little doubt that she has trekked round the dismal south London estate where she sets the play, has been trapped in its lifts, stumbled along its high concrete walk-

ways and met the old girls in the laundrette.

But where's the story, what's the point? Tamara Empson's loud-but insecure Chantelle fools about with Akiya Eyo's much younger Tracey, who has romantic yearnings, a capacity for violence and bad problems with her teeth. Every now and then they encounter Nicola Stapleton's confused Nazasha, who has just lost her unlovable father and, instead of joining the few mourners at his funeral, finds a dead pigeon and organises its cremation. There is a sense of drift and vague, unprovoked aggression all around.

There are also tough old birds who swap doleful stories and cups of tea as they trudge from the laundrette to the supermarket and back again. Walters observes them with cool affection, and they are superbly played by Miriam Karlin, Stella Tanner and Kate Williams. What is the author's reason for introducing them? That, too, is not so clear. But they are great company.

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FILM
Steve Buscemi, the king of American independent actors, goes behind the camera to make his first film



CHOICE 1
Kenneth Cranham stars in Peter Gill's new *Cardiff East* for the National
VENUE: Opens tonight at the Cottesloe Theatre

THE TIMES ARTS



CHOICE 2
Cliff Richard brings his *Heathcliff* to London
VENUE: Opens tonight at the Labatts Apollo



CHOICE 3
The Rambert Dance Company spring tour reaches Oxford
VENUE: Tonight at the Apollo, Oxford

CINEMA: Carol Allen meets Steve Buscemi, who wrote, directed and stars in *Trees Lounge*

The weirdo goes straight

The actor Steve Buscemi is thought of by most filmmakers as the man with bulging eyes, fleshy lips and a lot of teeth who specialises in weirdos. Characters such as the whingeing Mr Pink in *Reservoir Dogs*, or the kidnapper whose face is shot off in *Fargo*, or the creepy bellhop in *Baron Fink* and the man doing tours of a hellish City of Angels in *Escape From LA*.

But there is more to this actor than just weaselly low-lifers. Buscemi was also the stressed-out director trying to get a low-budget movie made in Tom DiCillo's appealing comedy *Living in Oblivion*, and he made his mark in his very first film, *Parting Glances*, as a witty rock musician coping with HIV.

This week in *Trees Lounge*, his first film as director, which he also wrote and stars in, we get a chance to see the real Buscemi. Or rather, Buscemi as he might have been if he had not, at the age of 30, left the working-class Long Island suburb of Valley Stream for the bright lights of Manhattan and a low-rent apartment in the East Village.

"That was my starting point for the script," he explains. "I don't know what would really have happened if I'd stayed in Valley Stream, but based on what I was doing while I was living there, which was hanging out in bars, working in a gas station and driving an ice-cream truck, I could have turned out like Tommy."

In the film, Tommy is a likeable, irresponsible loser. He has lost his job in a garage, his marriage and his pregnant girlfriend, and spends most of his time hanging out in the *Trees Lounge* bar of the title. Unlike his fictional alter ego, Buscemi, now 38, is happily married, devoted to his performance artist wife, Jo Andres, and his five-year-old son, Lucien. And, in contrast to the wound-up, twitchy-fingered characters he so often plays, in real life he appears relaxed and thoughtful, with a friendly grin and a genuinely humorous laugh.

He is still close to his family in Valley Stream, where he shot the film. His father, a retired sanitation engineer,

who has a cameo role in the movie, was keen that his son should have a "real job", so when the young Buscemi first moved to the city he worked as a furniture remover and then in the fire service. But he also appeared in off-off Broadway fringe theatre in his spare time, where he and Mark Boone Jr, who plays his best friend in the film, collected a loyal following for the plays they wrote and performed. Then in 1986, he took the plunge with *Parting Glances*, and gave up the fireman's life to be a full-time actor. Over the next few years he appeared in nearly 20 films, sometimes in tiny parts, sometimes good supporting roles. Then in 1992 came *Reservoir Dogs*, a low-budget independent movie with a first-time writer/director, in which Buscemi played the role Quentin Tarantino had originally intended for himself.

"Buscemi recalls: "Quentin was unknown, but he's a very strong personality, very passionate about film and he didn't seem like a first-timer. *Reservoir Dogs* was considered a crime film but there's actually very little action compared to most films of that genre. It's more like a play, with strong, complex and unpredictable characters, and that was why I was attracted to that script."

"Same thing in *Fargo*. If you put the two heaves in a more mainstream film you wouldn't learn half as much about them, they'd be just the 'kidnappers', but the Coen brothers are interested in them and you really get their relationship."

As a result of films like these Buscemi is regarded as one of the leading lights of the independent film scene. But he has also had roles in several mainstream Hollywood movies, such as *Billy Bathgate*, the forthcoming action thriller *Con Air*, about a gang of convicts hijacking a prison plane, and last year's *Escape From LA*.

"We were still working on *Trees Lounge* when I did *Escape From LA*, but I really needed to get a job, not to pay for the film but to pay my bills. I've always tried to keep a balance, making my living doing the more commercial films while the most challeng-



Steve Buscemi has gone back to his roots for *Trees Lounge*, his first film as a director

ing and interesting parts for me have been in the independent films."

It was inevitable that Buscemi's first film as a writer and director would be a low-budget independent movie, with a story that has its roots in those fondly remembered days in the East Village. "I

really missed the creative control and responsibility we had when Mark and I were creating our own work," he says. "So I wrote a screenplay with a part for myself and for him and some other actors I had worked with, like Elizabeth Bracco and Debi Mazar. "I didn't even try getting the

money from the studios because, unless I had big-name actors in all the leading parts which I wasn't interested in doing, it's not what they would deem a commercial film. I really wanted to work with the people for whom I wrote these parts."

• *Trees Lounge* opens on Friday

LONDON

CARDIFF EAST: Kenneth Cranham, Karl Johnson, Windsor Davies in the cast of Peter Gill's new play, set on a Welsh housing estate in the 1980s. Theatres (Cottesloe), South Bank SE1 (0171-606 2222). Opens tonight, 7pm. Tomorrow, 7.30pm. In rep.

HEATHCLIFF: Paraded by the critics, loved by the time, Cliff Richard's musical London offers an enormous national tour. Helen Houson plays Cathy, with songs by Tim Rice and lyrics by Frank Harte. Labatts Apollo, Queen Caroline Street, Hammersmith, NW6 (0171-416 8259). Opens tonight, 7pm. Then Mon-Sat, 8pm. Until April 5.

HAMMAM WOODHOUSE: An exhibition of contemporary lighting as sculpture. Woodhouse's massive lamps — some reaching as high as eight feet — are cast in bronze and plaster, while his shades are sculpted in wire and string, paper and muslin. Old Vic, Waterloo Road, SE1 (0171-432 7519). In rep. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm. Sun. parts play on Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm and 7.30pm. Until February 22.

IVANOV: Ralph Fiennes heads a splendid cast that includes Helen Mirren, David Tennant, Oliver Ford Davies, in Jonathan Kent's production of Chekhov's first produced play. New venue by David Harman. Almeida, Almeida Street, N1 (0171-359 4040). Now previewing, 7.30pm. Opens Feb 10, 7pm. Then Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun. 2pm. Until April 5.

AMERICAN BUFFALO: Douglas Hodge plays the three small-time crooks in David Mamet's gripping drama. Great dialogue. Lindsey Foweraker. Young Vic, 66 The Cut, SE1 (0171-928 6363). Previewing from tonight, 7.30pm. Opens Feb 18, 7.30pm.

BABYFACE: First major adaptation of one of Armistead Maupin's tales of the City. Set in Los Angeles and London, directed by Ian Bowen for Cytel Unity Theatre. WI and pretty bodies. Duff Hall, Charles St, WC1 (0171-437 8279). Tue-Sat, 7.30pm. Until March 1.

HENRY IN PARTS 1 AND 2: Fether and son Timothy and Samuel West play Falstaff and young Henry Hal in the English Touring Theatre production by Stephen Ure. Old Vic, Waterloo Road, SE1 (0171-432 7519). In rep. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm. Sun. parts play on Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm and 7.30pm. Until February 22.

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TODAY'S CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Gillian Smyth

THE STUDY: 28 Old Church Street, SW6 (0171-610 0069). Today-Sun, 10.30am-12.30pm.

ELSEWHERE: The recording set of the queen of the New York literary set in the 1920s and 1930s, Dorothy Parker, brought to life in a one-woman show, Tim Hodge — Complete! The Other Space, Everyman, Regent Street (01242 572373). Tonight-Fri, 8pm.

CONVENTRY: Phoenix Dance Company celebrates its 15th anniversary with a triple bill. Dorian Singh Shree's *White Pickle* is set to a soundtrack of contemporary music. *Reflection*, inspired by Rodin's sculpture, is performed to a live jazz score, while *Covering Ground* explores the landscape of the Phoenix dancers. Warwick Arts Centre, University of Warwick (01926 524524). Tonight-Sat, 7.30pm.

GLASGOW: Glas Haverall's new production of *The Flea Circus* for

THEATRE GUIDE

Jeremy Kingston's assessment of theatre showing in London

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NEW RELEASES

• **FLY AWAY HOME (U):** Endearing tale of orphaned Canada geese, with Anne Pequin and Jeff Daniels. Director, Carol Balch. Clapham Picture House (0171-437 8279). Mon-Sat, 7.30pm. Sun. 2pm. Until March 1.

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 An exclusive 5 bedroom house with 2 reception rooms and 2 en-suite shower rooms on the outskirts of the town centre.

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Fulham, SW6 From £247,500 01628 770070
 Fulham Reach. On the banks of the River Thames a superior development of luxury apartments with balconies or terraces, basement parking and all with river views.

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Southdown £ to be announced 01403 211230
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Lo Stregone catches eye in weighting game

and National an excellent medium setting. Dublin Viper would be the favorite if he were allowed to enter the National fences, which John Hughes Chase in 1995, but his name is doubt. Lo Streetage has been a good horse since leaving the ground obvious candidate, but is unlikely to find one or two too good. He won the Hennessy Gold Cup last year, and he is still good run in the Cheltenham Gold he odds contract sharply, but a few more years will see him up there as a tough course last year, but this season. AVRO ANSON, a hurdler, showed his best form over a reappearance at Haydock Park in December last time, but around jumper who stays well and round. He is being trained with the and is a very handy horse. D-J-1 and D-J-2 are also good horses. LORD GYLLENIE is strength to stretch, winning in good water on Saturday. He has been successful, which leaves him just behind, with William Hill, at each-way wager.

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 40 Hurricane Andrew. 4.10 Master
 tie.
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LE (\$2,427; 2m) (10 runners)

RED 6 (D,F) & Richards 7-11-10..... F Callaghan 80
GOLD 9 (D,G) L Lungo 7-11-37eq W Dowling (5) 80
COLET 9 (8F) P Mountain 8-11-0 & McCracken (6) 80
25 (D,F) Miss J Cozen 8-10-11..... M Newton 80
C Parker 7-10-5..... Tinsan Davidson (7) 80
9 Miles L Soddell 5-10-5..... T Skidley (5) 80

SON STRATHERN NOVICES HANDICAP
(m) (9)

MAKER 6 (15) Miss L Russell 5-12-0. A Thornton —
P J JARNEY 75 E. M. Lewis 6.5-11-0. R Carberry —
12 & Kelly 7-10-0. B Gashen —
AWAY 15 J. Goldie 6-10-0. C Cahill 86 —
Thos. 11-2 Oshbury, 8-1 Vining Red, 10-1 Doublet
16-1 Seconds Away, 25-1 others.

AND 15 (D.G.) M Hammond 8-11-3	R Gentry	88
AND 16 P Monteith 7-10-11	R Supple	88
AND 4 H Ellison 8-10-10	K Johnson	88
AND 58 S Richards 7-10-9	A Dobbin	88
AND 62 F Justin 7-10-4	T Reed	88
AND 33 F Murray 8-10-0	D Buxley	88
AND 6 Mrs E Mackinnon 8-10-0	F Peratt	88
4-6) Know-No-How, 5-1 Her's A Dancer, Singing Sand, Lost Rock, Miss Morn, 33-1 others.		

(E2.399: 2m) (5)

AGENT 28 J Howard Johnson 10-12	...	P Carberry	96
FLAME 15 (GF) V Thompson 10-12	Mir M Thompson		96
FLAME PARTNER 12 (V) Miss V Ward 10-12	...	B Storey	96
IP Mowhead 10-12	...	A Dobbin	96
IP 26 M Hartwood 10-12	...	R Garity	96
PREVIOUS 16 C Packer 10-7	...	D Parker	96
2 McMillan, 7-2 Double Agent, 11-2 Kneet, 8-1			

Sounds Demons.

NARR HANDICAP CHASE

MADE 464 (C,Q,S) P Mountain 8-11-10...	A Dobbin	37
REAM 61 (V,F,S) B Ertson 7-11-7	K Johnson	96
12 (F) D Smith 8-11-6	P Milner	91
E ANDREW 22 (C,Q,F,S,S) J A Moore 9-11-6		
	N Smith	92
REME 8 (C,Q,F) M Toddman 8-11-2	P Carberry	88
GLENN 23 (B,D,F) P Chestnrough 10-10-8 A S Smith		90
47 (I,F,S) V Thompson 8-10-6	M R Thompson	90
Miss M Willigan 7-10-0	B Storey	93

Beyes: Dream, 5-1 Oakley, 11-2 Hurricane Andrew, 2-1 Rusty Blade, Rusty Dee.

JUNT CLUB CUP HUNTERS CHASE
3m) (9)
HICK 261 (D.F.S.) Mrs D Gibson 13-12-7
M127 271 (D.F.S.) Mrs V Jackson (5)
N 293 (D.B.F.S.) J Babbage 5-12-7 J Babbage (7)
LE 298 (D.F.S.) Mrs K Lamb 14-12-0
MSFER 272 (D.F.) D Faltman 8-12-0 C Storey (5)
N 293 (D.B.F.S.) K Anderson 7-12-0 A Parker (7)
LE 298 (D.F.S.) S Storey-Brown 10-12-0

GREEN NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE

85 (B.C.B.F.) J Howard Johnson 6-12-0	A S Smith	85
TYNE 50 M Hammond 8-11-10	R Garity	96
TYNE 85 G of Richards 6-11-5	A Dobbin	96
THE 14 (B) Miss L Siddall 5-11-5	A Thornton	98
72 (D) J Carr 9-11-0	N Smith	98
SPRING 8 (B) Mrs D Thornton 8-10-13	D Parker	94
N 109 (F) A McCaffrey 6-10-17	R Supple	96
ABOVE 15 (F) F Murphy 5-10-6	P Carberry	82
OWNERS 26 M Hammond 5-10-4	Mr C Bowyer (3)	94
WE TALENT 26 D Lamb 6-10-3	J Burke	96
23 (M) Ms L Plater 10-10-2	D Besley	96
LAKE 18 (B) J Dixon 8-10-0	B Storey	97
BROTHERS 85 I Jones 6-10-4	F Perrett	96

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WORLD CUP FOOTBALL

Shearer leads with courage and conviction

By DAVID MILLER

ITALY will have more technique, man for man, than England at Wembley tonight and, on paper, ought to win, yet only a rash gambler would forecast Italy's chances of victory at better than evens, never mind that they have won six of the last nine encounters between the teams.

The reasons for this seeming contradiction are to be found in the head rather than the feet. Whether it is Agincourt, Rorke's Drift, Dunkirk or the football field, the English remain level-headed in the face of adversity, masters of the tight squeeze.

The deadpan comment from the colour sergeant in *Zulu*, when a novice lieutenant plaintively asks why should they be the ones defending some isolated African outpost as the skyline darkens with advancing warriors, says it all: "Because we're 'ere, lad, because we're 'ere."

Much the same sort of sentiment was being brandished yesterday by the new England captain, Alan Shearer, who played every question concerning the skills of Italy with a dead bat. Dangerous attackers, Casiraghi and Zola? "We shall give them respect." A crucial cup-tie for England? "Yes, but only because it's the next one."

There is nothing remotely boastful about Shearer, no false assumptions about his qualities, yet he has an absolute certainty about what he does, and can do, that is chilling for opponents. The chemistry of his willpower, together with his shooting, however limited his technique on the ball, is an alarming prospect.

"My confidence never changes," Shearer said, expressionless, and he meant just that, even when he went ten games without scoring for England. That is why Terry Venables never doubted Shearer as the leader of his attack.

Even the many years of being obliged to take a seat

behind Brazil, Germany and Italy, and now and then others, such as Hungary, Poland, Sweden or Norway, has not diminished this self-conviction among English players and it is this that continues to make them formidable. A line stretches from Stan Cullis, captain just before the Second World War, through Billy Wright and Bobby Moore down to the present day, to the likes of Tony Adams and Stuart Pearce.

The imperialist opinion, expressed in *The Times* after the victory over Italy at Highbury in 1934, lingers on: "The verdict is that England is still supreme in a game essentially



our own." Critics, I among them, may have been rude about the technical shortcomings of Adams or Pearce, but what has carried them through their international careers is this blinding sense of conviction: that any game is there to be won.

Every powerful team that plays England is conscious of this quality and seeks means to neutralise it, often by defence in numbers. The opposition know that being the better players is far from being enough — though, as Glenn Hoddle was keen to emphasise yesterday, there are players in the present England squad, such as Beckham and McManaman, who are fit to stand alongside any European or South American luminary.

The problem for Hoddle, quite apart from continuing anxieties about the fitness of

Adams and Ince, is that he knows this is a match that England must win if they are to retain confidence of qualifying from a group in which only the first is guaranteed a place in the finals. Italy will come to defend, to ensure, foremost, that they do not lose, and will regard a draw as an effective triumph.

It is all very well for Hoddle to say, as he did yesterday, that while this is a key game, "a single point wouldn't be a disaster". A draw would marginally give Italy a commanding position in the group and Hoddle therefore must field his strongest attacking team without leaving the door open. I believe the circumstances leave no room for Gascoigne, whose lack of pace nowadays has become too much of a handicap, whatever his inspirational qualities among his colleagues.

Assuming Adams and Ince are fit, with no reaction this morning to training yesterday, my choice of a team able both to defend and attack would be a defensive trio of Neville, Adams and Southgate behind a midfield quartet — Beckham, Ince, Batty, Le Saux — with McManaman free to run behind Shearer and Merson.

Ince and Batty would provide the shield for the back line, Beckham and Le Saux would provide the width, McManaman would introduce the variety that would oblige Italy to think every moment of the match.

The preference of Merson over Ferdinand could be a key factor. Ferdinand is the style of front-runner who would play into the hands of the Italian marking system. The roaming Merson, attacking from deep down both sides, would unsettle them and create more space for Shearer.

Whatever the selection, the excitement level will not be one decibel less than for the European championship semi-final against Germany last summer.



Winning post: Peruzzi makes a point to his team-mates during Italy's final training session at Wembley Stadium yesterday morning

Genial giant enjoys big reputation

Brian Glanville meets a brilliant Italian who has overcome several setbacks to inherit the mantle of the great Dino Zoff

Angelo Peruzzi will be 27 years old on Sunday. Whether it is a happy birthday will doubtless much depend on what happens this evening at Wembley, where this charming, acrobatic young man will be in the Italy goal.

Gigi Riva, a crack marksman from Italy's past, compares him with Dino Zoff, who went on keeping goal for Italy until he was over 40. "The same physical build, the same presence in goal."

But Zoff had an easier row to hoe than Peruzzi, who was struck down by a mysterious disease at 14, suspended for a year in October 1990 for taking something called Lipolip, an alleged stimulant that Peruzzi insisted he had taken simply to counteract his mother's cooking and to keep his weight down. Suspended with him was his AS Roma team-mate, Andrea Carnevale. There are those who whisper still that an innocent Peruzzi was led astray.

Be that as it may, he found it impossible to forgive Roma, who he felt, did not stand by

him. There was, however, one shining exception — Roberto Negriscio, the goalkeeper coach. He was the one man whom Peruzzi and his family, during that year out, would allow into their house. Peruzzi acknowledges that Negriscio was one of the most important figures in his career: "He was like a father."

The disease, which completely, if briefly, disabled him, puzzled a whole retinue of doctors. "A virus," Peruzzi said. "I had it for three months, I was out for six months and away it went."

Even his debut for Roma was made in dramatic circumstances. He was on the substitutes' bench in December 1987 at the San Siro, a mere 17-year-old, when the Roma goalkeeper, Franco Tancredi, was hit by a firework and carried off. Peruzzi came on and played like a veteran, was beaten only once, from a penalty, and the game against AC Milan was subsequently

awarded to Roma. In 1989-90, the club lent him to Verona and took him back the following season, only for the suspension to fall on him. When it was over, he joined Juventus, the club for which he saved two penalties in the European Cup final penalty shoot-out in Rome at the Olympic Stadium, where once he regularly played, last May.

Juventus was where he most wanted to be. "For me," he has said, "Juve has always been like Ferrari. The best, a point of reference, even in their rare defeats. I've never been a Roma fan, even though I was there for eight years."

In Italy's last game, against Northern Ireland in Palermo, Peruzzi saved his team from deep embarrassment. Ten minutes into the second half, the Irish suddenly attacked, Quinn hit a glorious first-time, left-footed shot and Peruzzi responded with a

remarkable save. Bryan Hamilton, the Northern Ireland manager, called it a world-class save, particularly special because, until then, Peruzzi had been virtually unemployed.

"I had just that one save in 90 minutes," Peruzzi said. "I thank their manager for what he said."

But what of the strange goal he gave away for Juventus, the only one of the match, in Turin recently at home to Parma, when, with the game in its infancy, Chiesa beat him with a seemingly harmless free kick? "The first minutes are difficult," Peruzzi said, "because you don't know whether you are in or out of the game."

Riva, himself an admirer of the Palermo save — "He was brave because he hadn't been tested; he found himself ready at the right moment, it could have been a crucial goal" — dismisses the Parma goal as just one of those things. "A

goalkeeper makes mistakes like everybody else."

It is said that, as a boy, one of the ways in which Peruzzi trained was to go fishing and catch trout and carp with his bare hands. At the age of 11, he had trials with Milan and Torino, but it was to Roma that he eventually went. Once at Juventus, he found another obstacle to negotiate, the impressive presence of their loquacious international goalkeeper, Stefano Tacconi. Peruzzi made the place his own when, playing in the Italian Cup in April 1992 against Milan, he saved a penalty from Franco Baresi.

He has been quoted as saying that the main danger to Italy comes from Alan Shearer, but he brushes this aside. "Yes, but not just him. McManaman, Ferdinand, if he plays, England has a lot of them."

It is hard to imagine the burly Peruzzi, nicknamed Tyson when he was at Roma by Nils Liedholm, the Swedish coach, being afraid of any of them. He has always been renowned for sang-froid. Not to mention for his engaging geniality.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

The first weekend in February saw the annual junior Camrose fixture. In this event, all the home international teams play each other in a round robin; there is an under-25 and an under-20 event. Representing England in the latter event were Richard Probst and Dafydd Jones, a pair of 16-year-olds from St Paul's School, who did very well on this deal from a national open knockout tournament:

Dealer North	Love all	IMPs	
♠A ♥AK32 ♦KQ73 ♣AQ73 ♠KJ762 ♥J764 ♦65 ♣J4	<div> <div> <div>N</div> <div>W</div> <div>E</div> <div>S</div> </div> <div> ♠10854 ♥10 ♦A10984 ♣886 </div> </div>	♠Q93 ♥Q985 ♦J2 ♣K1052	
S	W	N	E
2D	Pass	2C (1)	Pass
2D	All Pass		Pass
Contract: Six Diamonds		Lead: Five of diamonds	

(1) North's Three Spades showed a hand of at least 23 HCP, with a singleton spade and four cards in each of the other suits. When you are young and enthusiastic, you can remember that sort of method. South's jump to Six Diamonds was aggressive, but showed good appreciation of his hand.

Probst won the trump lead, cashed dummy's ace of spades and drew a second round of trumps, ending in hand. He then cross-ruffed spades and hearts, discarding his fourth spade on the king of hearts. Dummy's last four cards were all clubs, and declarer was in hand holding three clubs and a trump.

Declarer now led the nine of

clubs and ducked it to East. As it turned out, East had nothing but clubs left; he had to return one away from his king into dummy's tenace, enabling declarer to score both the ace and queen even when the king was offside.

This was a "cost-nothing" play for declarer. Had East had a major-suit card left and returned it when in with the ten of clubs, declarer would have ruffed and taken a normal club finesse. Declarer's play would also have gained when West had both the jack and ten of clubs.

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Triple tie

With five rounds to go in Linares, Judit Polgar, Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik share the lead with 4½ points out of 6. Michael Adams, of Great Britain, has 4. In the sixth round, Kasparov won a complicated game against Topalov, the Bulgarian grandmaster. Topalov's eighth move appears to have been too ambitious and was the likely cause of his subsequent difficulties.

White: Veselin Topalov
Black: Garry Kasparov
Linares, February 1997.

Queen's Gambit Declined

- 1 c4 e6
- 2 Nc3 d5
- 3 d4 Be7
- 4 cxd5 exd5
- 5 Bf4 Nf6
- 6 e3 Bc6
- 7 Qb3 Nc6
- 8 g4 Ng4
- 9 Nxd5 O-O
- 10 Bg2 Bh4
- 11 Bg3 Be6
- 12 Kf1 a4
- 13 Nh3 a4
- 14 Qc4 Ne6
- 15 Qc5 b6
- 16 Bxh4 bxc5
- 17 Bxh5 Bxh5
- 18 Ne7+ Kd6
- 19 d5 Bc7
- 20 Rf1 c4
- 21 Ng5 h6
- 22 N3 Rf8
- 23 N3 Nf6
- 24 Nd4 fxe2
- 25 B3 fxe2
- 26 Kg2 fxe2
- 27 Nce6 Bxc6
- 28 Nxc6 Nxc6
- 29 dxc6 Rxc3
- 30 Rxc4 Rf3
- 31 Rd4 Rb2
- 32 Rf1 Rd2
- 33 Rb4 Kd7
- 34 Rb7 Ne8
- 35 Kg3 g6

Although White lost on time, his position is most unsatisfactory. His passed pawn can easily be stopped. Meanwhile, Black is two pawns ahead with serious threats against White's king and bishop.

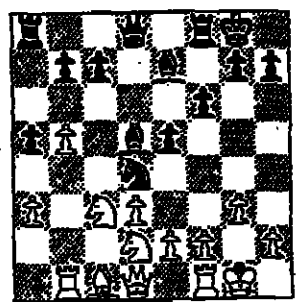
Russian election

Anatoly Karpov is absent from Linares. He was committed to an election campaign — which he lost — for the Russian Parliament in his home town of Tula.

British championship

The British championship, set for Hove in August, has attracted significant sponsorship from Smith and Williamson, chartered accountants and investment managers. The first prize this year will now be £10,000. It is likely that, for the first time in several years, the lure of such a prize will attract all of Britain's top grandmasters into contention.

Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.



White to play. This position is from the game Sokolov — Savko, Latvia, 1994. This looks like a normal middlegame position, but White can force the immediate win of material. How?

Solution on page 46

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

LANGUE DE BOEUF

- a. A coarse traffic sign
- a. A coarse terrine
- a. A coarse leaf

MUNGO

- a. A hot toddy
- a. Coarse cloth
- a. A mountain pony

LIRK

- a. A Gaelic dagger
- a. A bird
- a. A wrinkle

MERITOT

- a. A measure of Navy rum
- a. An Indian songbird
- a. A swing

Answers on page 46

Expect a throaty growl from the 16 valve engine.

And a giggling noise from the driver's seat.

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Kicking sport's conventions into touch

Sport has rules and a format for dealing with those who break them. A boxer who knees his opponent in the crotch can expect to be disqualified. Sport also has conventions and is powerless against those who will not abide by them.

Oliver McCall simply refused to fight Lennox Lewis in Las Vegas at the weekend. This is not exactly against the rules of boxing — Muhammad Ali beat George Foreman by incorporating periods of passivity into his strategy — but it does not so much defy the conventions as destroy them. And there is simply nothing that can be done about it.

I was reminded, bizarrely enough, of my career as a rugby player. I went to a rugby school, which was enough to make anyone a lifelong enthusiast for soccer. At the age of 13, those who had some kind of taste for rugby played a selection game, or against another school.

The rest of us made a journey to Raynes Park to play house matches. Strange games, these, played on bitterly cold, surreal afternoons. Imagine it: 15 boys who loathed every second of what they were doing

playing against 15 more who desperately wanted to go home. No one cared a fig about winning or losing. The only priorities were to get off the pitch, dodge the showers and get on the train at Raynes Park station.

Nobody tackled. Not ever. Occasionally, a ball-carrier was grasped apologetically around the waist. No one was going to dive on the floor and risk a boot in the face. "Legs, legs, legs," the teacher would shout, but we knew better than to try that.

'Nobody at school wanted confrontation'

We played what was basically a passing game. Lord, how we passed. We passed all the time, because no one wanted the ball. If you had the ball, people would grab you; without it, you were safe. Naturally, then, everyone's priority on getting the ball was to dispose of it.

It follows that one of the regular moves in these strange games was the pass into touch. It was considered a perfectly acceptable play. If you had the ball and were, by some strange oversight, running with it, someone would reluctantly steel himself to grab you, but before he grabbed, you would have already thrown the ball into touch. Occasionally, some fool would

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

show some flicker of keenness and be made captain before his ardour had time to cool. I remember one such briefly enthusiastic person, flushed with the joy of his appointment, insisting that I played as hooker. This was not a promotion, still less tactics. It was a punishment for passing the ball into touch. But it was not a well thought out punishment.

Scrummies, like most other aspects of this form of the game, were strange. Nobody pushed, you see, not at all.

Scrummies were rambling, fundamentally amiable, 32-legged beasts that shifted aimlessly about the grass. In my one match as hooker, I did not win much ball. I toe-poked, violently, every ball that came near me, sending it scudding into the hands of the opposing scrum half. Thus, abandoning even the conventions of our own sorry games, I made a significant creative contribution to the sport they chose for me.

Lord knows what the teachers thought of it all: 30 boys, every one of whom hated everything about a game that the teachers presumably took some kind of pleasure in. We simply did not want to play and so the game took this bizarre form. We could not accept the conventions of enmity. We did not accept the need for confrontation, or even competition. What we wanted was to go home. Every week, the game of rugby union died.

No, association football was our game and we played endlessly, tirelessly, wherever and whenever it was permitted, which was not often, footy being frightfully déclassé. I remember the joy when we were at last allowed to use the gym for five-a-sides

and recall with pleasure the ferocity of those games. We held to the conventions then, all right. My taste for goalkeeping was honed in the vicious, thudding pinball of that sweat-stinking gym. But that is by the by.

No sport exists by its conventions and is powerless against those who will not abide by them. That is true of most areas of life, from business meetings to seductions. Those who refuse the deep conventions by which we live are truly difficult people — and truly dangerous.

These people are generally called fanatics, or saints. Either way, they generally get locked up or otherwise disposed of. To ignore the conventions is, you see, a deeply frightening thing. Without conventions we are naked.

We rely on conventions to get us through the day. McCall's refusal to fight turned him into a Samson, pulling the temple of boxing down about his ears. Those who refuse to play the games demanded by society do the same thing with real life.

What did you learn at school today? Oh, it was games afternoon. We went to Raynes Park and learnt how to overthrow society.

'The priority was to dodge the shower'

Family values old and new

20/20 — A View of the Century, Radio 4, 7.45pm.

The second tranche of this outstanding project, now fronted by Michael Ignatieff, has been as compelling as John Tusa's first series. Tonight it deals with a subject of vast contemporary interest, the family, in the context of growing up and growing old. This curious human unit has become a cocoon in the political and cultural imagination. Ignatieff takes us pasted on all sides of the argument, including some who are so passionate from family life that they see the family as a remote dream accessed through television sitcoms.

Flashpoints, Radio 4, 9.00pm. This is a new series that has chosen a slightly odd starting point. The series takes as its focus significant moments in science, but I am surprised that it starts with the birth of Louise Brown, the first test-tube baby, a subject covered over the years to an almost worshipping extent. However, persistence is rewarded because the programme is not a mere rehash of the Brown case, but an interesting look at how artificial insemination techniques have changed and what may be possible, not to say desirable, in the future. The interviewees include Baroness Warswick, Bob Edwards — one half of the team that brought Louise Brown into the world — and the fertility specialist Lord Winston.

Peter Barnard

RADIO 1

7.00am Simon Mayo, includes 7.30am News. 8.00am Kevin Greening. 12.00pm Mary Anne Hobbs, includes 12.30pm News. 2.00pm Nicky Campbell. 4.00pm Mark Goodier, includes the Chart Hour. 6.30pm The X Factor. 7.00pm Evening Session, with Steve Lamacq and Jo Whiley. Includes an interview with members of the band The Verve. 10.00pm Stuart Maconie. 11.00pm Stuart Maconie. 11.30pm Stuart Maconie. 11.55pm Stuart Maconie. 12.00am Stuart Maconie. 12.30am Stuart Maconie. 1.00am Stuart Maconie. 1.30am Stuart Maconie. 2.00am Stuart Maconie. 2.30am Stuart Maconie. 3.00am Stuart Maconie. 3.30am Stuart Maconie. 4.00am Stuart Maconie. 4.30am Stuart Maconie. 5.00am Stuart Maconie. 5.30am Stuart Maconie. 6.00am Stuart Maconie. 6.30am Stuart Maconie. 7.00am Stuart Maconie. 7.30am Stuart Maconie. 8.00am Stuart Maconie. 8.30am Stuart Maconie. 9.00am Stuart Maconie. 9.30am Stuart Maconie. 10.00am Stuart Maconie. 10.30am Stuart Maconie. 11.00am Stuart Maconie. 11.30am Stuart Maconie. 11.55pm Stuart Maconie. 12.00am Stuart Maconie. 12.30am Stuart Maconie. 1.00am Stuart Maconie. 1.30am Stuart Maconie. 2.00am Stuart Maconie. 2.30am Stuart Maconie. 3.00am Stuart Maconie. 3.30am Stuart Maconie. 4.00am Stuart Maconie. 4.30am Stuart Maconie. 5.00am Stuart Maconie. 5.30am 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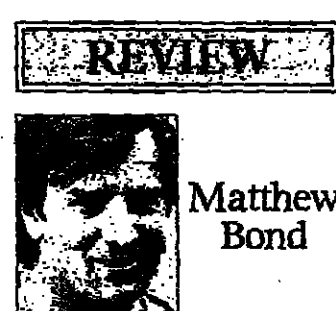
This time, the ayes have it for the Princess

Something strange happens to Diana, Princess of Wales, when a microphone is shown under her shapely nose. But then again something strange happens to nearly everybody who finds themselves in that stressful situation. Throats dry, the vocal cords contract and suddenly a rogue set of somebody else's vowels send you rocketing up the social ladder. Now, that's a useful tip for your starting point is safely in the class, but when you're an early daughter and the mother of the future King... it's a problem. "Last month, I flew to Angola, in South West Africa," began last night's *Diary of a Princess* (BBC1). Yup, definitely a problem. That, however, is as mocking as it's going to get. OK, so the Princess isn't exactly a threat to the likes of Andrew Sachs and Veronika Hyks in the lucrative voice-over market. But then again I don't suppose they're much good

at bouncing gamely around in a minibus, being charming to everybody and still managing to look at least half-a-million dollars. If *Princess* was the Princess's darkest hour (it certainly was in the eye make-up department) then this *Heart of the Matter* special saw the pendulum swinging back strongly in her favour. It is difficult to know who will have found watching this film most uncomfortable. The Royal Family perhaps, forced — once again — to acknowledge that the Princess is taller, prettier and about a hundred times better with the schoolgirlish narration was a tad off-putting, the spontaneous and unscripted conversations she had with aid workers and the victims of Angola's landmines were not. She laughed, she listened, she sympathised. It was an unbeatable combination. Certainly, it will have seen off

the politicians who ungallantly took advantage of the parliamentary lobby system to criticise her trip. In an enlightening sequence, the cameras captured the abrasive but perfectly professional question asked, on the hoof, by the BBC's royal correspondent Jennie Bond ("some politicians have described you as a loose cannon..."), the Princess's confusion at the curious follow-up ("are you aligning yourself with Labour Party policy?") and her fearful retreat back to the minibus. "Who says I'm a loose cannon?" Not anybody with an election to win.

There will be some who feel that the BBC should not have handed over half an hour of airtime for what could easily be construed as a Princess political broadcast. On this occasion, however, I side with the corporation — for grabbing a Palace-sent opportunity and argu-



Matthew Bond

ing about it afterwards. As for the criticism that the film was one-sided... well, it was. But against the combination of the Princess and the appalling pictures of the maimed, I'd imagine the queue of those wanting to argue the case for the retention of landmines was not exactly a long one.

Elsewhere it was a night of farewells, au revoirs and at least one "Don't ring us, we'll ring you",

as a whole raft of series came to an end.

Most poignant, inevitably, was the last instalment of Geoff Hamilton's *Paradise Gardens* (BBC2), marking as it did the final chapter in Hamilton's broadcasting career. There have been other opportunities to say goodbye to this popular horticulturalist, so this final programme had sensibly been declared a sentiment-free, as well as tear-free zone.

There was none of that painfully apocryphal stuff about "creating heaven on earth" that made some of the earlier programmes in the series a little difficult to get through. Instead, Hamilton signed off with a selection of other people's gardens (including that of a woman who made up for falling eyesight by having a garden that smelt like a tart's boudoir).

Finally, he learnt on his garden wall and had a bit of a chat. A garden is a very splendid thing, he

unsurprisingly concluded: "It puts a song in your heart and fills each day of your life with joy — make sure you don't miss out." And then he just ambled off. Flowers certainly, but definitely no fuss.

By contrast, nothing will convince me that we have seen the last of Benedict Allen. He and his three camels had finally made it to the end of *Namibia's Skeleton Coast* (BBC2) and he could stop squinting into the video camera and banging on about how nice it was to be on his own again. As he bade a tearful farewell to his camels, things got predictably introspective.

"Exploration," he announced, "is not about conquering nature... it's about leaving what you know at home, opening yourself up to whatever is there and letting it leave its mark on you." And there was I thinking that exploration was about getting

yourself on television. Silly me. Finally, let us turn to comedy. The shortage of laughs that has afflicted this series of *Harry Enfield & Chums* (BBC1) is nothing that more aggressive direction and a little more originality could not solve. That said, Kevin's improbable coming of age last night was probably worth a new series on its own.

The shortage of laughs that has afflicted *Grown-Ups* (BBC2), however, is more serious, symptomatic of an ambitious series that somehow managed to fall short of every target it set itself. It wasn't fast enough... which, for a sitcom based on a group of friends in their thirties, was something of a flaw. Despite the hard work of the cast, I never warmed to any of the characters and never fully understood how they might have become friends. Thank heaven they're repeating *Friends*.

CHOICE

The Village BBC2, 8.30pm

This gentle series about rural life in Hampshire has been attracting audiences of 2½ million, highly gratifying for a weekday daytime slot on a minority channel. It seems viewers are discriminating enough to sniff out quality, whenever it is scheduled. For newcomers, the village is Bentley and its close little community of rich human stories, courtship pursued by the unseen presenter, Nigel Farrer. The new series opens with a mystery. Where is Nicholas Parsons? He is supposed to be the star guest at the centenary life but an hour after he was due, he never appears. Meanwhile, Sue, the village bobby, is investigating an act of sabotage at the allotments and Colin the farmer, whose language is so filthy that much of it has to be bleeped out, has got a new girlfriend.

Counterblast: Baby on Board BBC2, 7.30pm

A north London GP, Dr Mike Fitzpatrick, launches his series which challenges conventional attitudes on topics of the day. Dr Fitzpatrick's beef is that society has become obsessed with children. By his means that children are being put first and parents last, to the detriment of both. Compared with children 50 years ago, today's kids are overprotected and overvalued. The series of advice from child care experts only makes parents anxious and confused. As one of the mothers featured on the film puts it: "You feel bombarded and pressurised to do the right thing and there's no real agreement as to what the right thing is." It is a lively polemic, thoughtfully argued and crisply edited. *Dr Mike* does not mean you have to subscribe to its views.

The Aristocrat BBC2, 9.00pm

The history of the stately home set reaches 1945 and a Labour landslide at the general election. With the young Denis Healey denouncing the upper classes as selfish, depraved, dissolute and decadent, the aristocracy have been expected few favours from the Attlee Government. Curiously, though, Labour proved not unsympathetic to the plight of the impoverished landowners, who became reincarnated as guardians of the national heritage and even received public money to help them out. Even so, more than 400 stately homes were demolished in the ten years after the war and owners of many that remained were forced to open them to the public. But nepotism still flourished in high places. Harold Macmillan, who had entered the aristocracy through marriage, had no fewer than 35 relatives in his Government.

Trouble at the Top: Nightmares at Canary Wharf 2 — Kelvin's Revenge BBC2, 9.50pm

Nobody who saw it will easily forget Robert Threlkirk's hilarious account of the troubled birth of the cable television channel, Live TV. The hard-wearing Janet Street-Porter was in charge, promising a new kind of station with the most advanced technology in Europe. But there was not enough money, the presenters were untalented and the much-awaited hardware failed to work. Exit Street-Porter and enter her erstwhile boss, Kelvin MacKenzie. This updated film follows MacKenzie's rescue operation. His diagnosis is that Live TV has been failing the public. To remedy this he introduces topical darts, weather forecasts in Norwegian and a toy rabbit to enliven the news. And his revenge on Street-Porter is a soap opera about a woman trying to run a television station.

Peter Waymark

8.00am GMTV (1433251)

9.25am Win, Lose or Draw (1537541)

9.55am Regional News (1) (5512305)

10.00am The Time, The Place (14541)

10.30am This Morning (1) (3385164)

12.20pm Regional News (1) (3385299)

12.30am News (1) and weather (7343485)

12.55am Shortland Street (1) (7342305)

Home and Away (1) (7342305)

1.50am News (1) (3385299)

2.50am News (1) (3385299)

3.20am News (1) (3385299)

3.25am Regional News (1) (4050378)

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As HTV West except:

12.55pm-1.25 A Country Practice (7342305)

5.10-5.40 Shortland Street (7313541)

6.25-7.00 Central News (936376)

11.55am Max Monroe: Loose Cannon (731218)

1.55am Funky Bunker (779355)

2.55am The Chart Show (930302)

3.50am Comedy Central (259395)

4.45am Central Jobfinder '97 (8291394)

5.20am Asian Eye (271435)

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RACING 43

Dublin Flyer carries weight of expectation into Grand National

SPORT

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 1997

SIMON BARNES 46

Sport at the mercy of those who refuse to play ball



Hodde ready to take risks as England seek victory over Italy in World Cup qualifier

Le Tissier likely to be given Latin test

By ROB HUGHES, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

INTRIGUE was always the game of the Italians: a physical reliance bordering on naivety was more the method of the English. Yet as both teams bedded down in their separate hotels a couple of miles apart in Buckinghamshire last night, was it Glenn Hoddle who was preparing the sting for the World Cup qualifying game at Wembley Stadium tonight?

As Hoddle, the England coach, counted the injured in and out of the treatment room yesterday, he seemed almost too eager to send the media back to the Italian camp with the word that Paul Gascoigne had, after all, passed his fitness test with flying colours. Cesare Maldini, who has been in professional football longer than the 39 years his England counterpart has been alive, may or may not be fooled.

But surely Gascoigne, with questions about his fitness in mind and body, would be an offering simply too good for Italy to believe. They know, from his Lazio days, how easily he can be put off his stroke, they are masters at provocation and, given the infirmity of Gascoigne's injured ankle and the damning statistics of his performance against Georgia in Tbilisi, the doubts concerning the playful England maestro surely outweigh the sense in risking him?

Nevertheless, if Hoddle is indeed plotting to surprise his opponent, England do possess alternative playmakers, the like of which Italy, for all the collective discipline and technique in their game, should envy.

One thinks, naturally, of Steve McManaman, who craves an opportunity to be released in the England side in the manner to which he seemed born at Liverpool. Hoddle has endorsed the feeling all week long that, indeed, McManaman's forte is to play a "floating" role, to go where instinct takes him, to run at retreating defenders, to exercise his own ball control and not to fret about his comparative inability to put the ball in the net.



GROUP TWO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Italy	3	1	1	1	4	3	5
Poland	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Georgia	3	0	0	3	2	8	0
Moldova	3	0	0	3	2	8	0

RESULTS: Moldova 0 England 3; Moldova 1 Italy 3; England 2 Poland 1; Italy 1 Georgia 0; Georgia 0 England 2; Poland 2 Moldova 1.

their sweeper system, alert to them — and ready.

What if Hoddle, the young Machiavelli, has pre-empted all of this? Who could he throw into the fray, as an alternative to Ferdinand, as a maverick that Italy do not expect? It will not be Paul Merson, resurgent though his season has been for Arsenal. It will not be Robbie Fowler, the pick-pocket of English defences. It will not be Nick Barmby, nor the ageing lion, Ian Wright.

Who then? Try Matthew Le Tissier. He partnered Shearer for years at Southampton, partnered and heavily outscored him, because Shearer was the willing workhorse at The Dell, distracting and drawing players aside for the languid technique of Le Tissier to strike.

Now, Le Tissier is not every

Englishman's favourite. One can hear the chorus of disbelief, the cries that Venables had his number, that Le Tissier was gifted but lazy. So many said the same of Hoddle and since Le Tissier was one of the first in the new coach's squad, the day had to come, sooner or later, when the coach put his faith in a player mistrusted in the industrial English environment.

Perhaps it would be daring in the extreme for that trust to be paraded before 76,000 people tonight. The Italians may masquerade as refined players and Paolo Maldini, the coach's son, may be the classiest left back in the business, but, like his father, an Italy defender before him, the younger Maldini has a cynical side, as was apparent in Euro 96, when his boot caught Alexander Mostovoi, of Russia, high and late.

I would not belittle Italy. Gianfranco Zola is a wonderful butterfly of a player. He floats in a different way to McManaman, but who can tie him down, who can counter his wit on the move or can deny his bend on the flight of a free kick? A wonderful, elusive, seasoned talent in a well-balanced Italy team. Yet as the visiting players took to the snooker table at their hotel last night, the thought struck home that it is getting on for 20 years since Italy boasted a true fantasista, a playmaker of all the talents, one who could "invent" the game.

If, as one suspects, England build a midfield holding partnership of David Batty and Paul Ince — the latter is likely to require a painstaking injection into his strained thigh muscle — the platform would exist for that gamble of gambles. Le Tissier striding forward, inventing things, and linking with McManaman behind the high intensity of Shearer's leadership.

Against the Italians, who



Zola, centre, the diminutive Italy forward, tries to keep out the cold during training at Wembley yesterday. Photograph: Marc Aspland

are practitioners of contrived boredom, this might or might not enable England to break through. Zero-zero, the classic away result in the playing era of Cesare Maldini, is still a frightening and unwelcome prospect. It was prevalent not only in the Sixties, when Maldini Sr finished, but through the 81 caps of his

assistant, Marco Tardelli, who played for Italy until 1983. Pragmatic players both of them, and yet Hoddle was defiant at Bisham Abbey, claiming that English players were not inferior in technical qualities, rather that the Italians in the FA Carling Premiership are now finding just how difficult it is to use

technique amid the frenetic pace and clamour of English grounds. The crux could be that, as Chelsea's Italians showed in that invigorating FA Cup victory over Liverpool, it is easier to make the Italians run and compete than it might be to lace artistry into Englishmen. Secondly, there is a danger of

England being too vulnerable too the counterattack. David Seaman, the goalkeeper, is ready to play through pain; doubtless Tony Adams would lead to do so as well. But Hoddle is aware that an ankle injury, which Adams has, cannot be treated by injection, in the way which allowed the defender to soldier through last summer with a chronic knee problem. The ankle is, as Hoddle points out, a weight-bearing joint, and with Sol Campbell available, the medical risk may not be worthwhile.

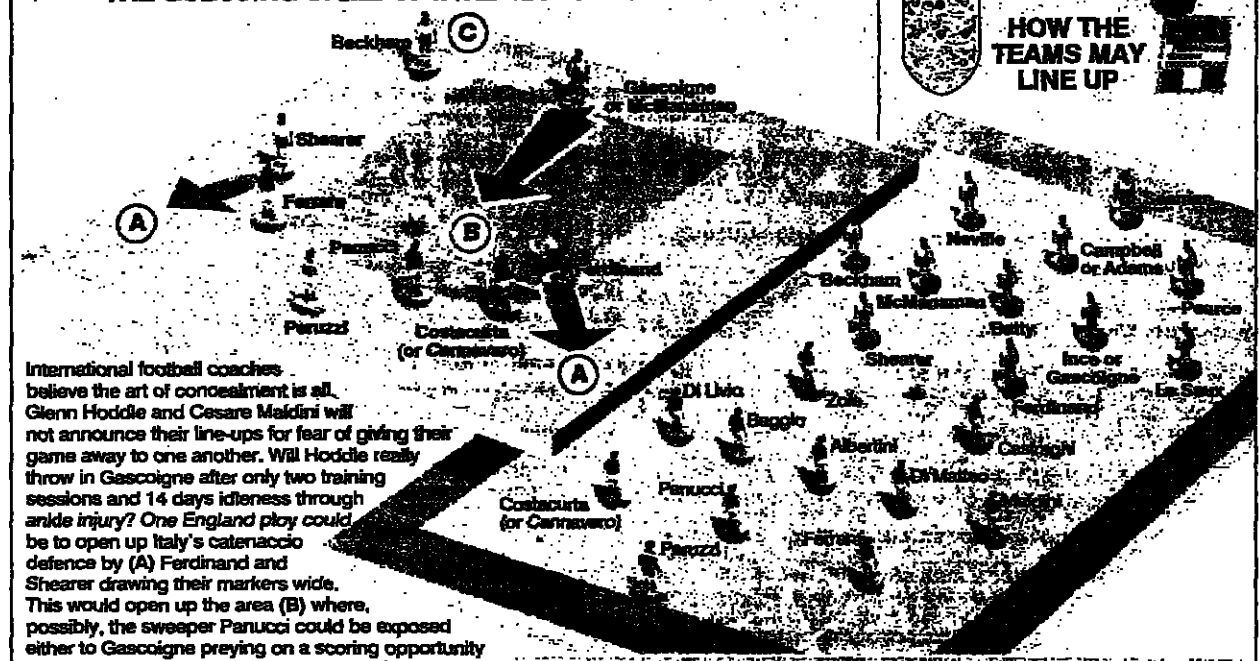
Italy, should they get into deficit, have players of breathtaking quality in reserve. Enrico Chiesa, who shoots with a sniper's accuracy, Alessandro Del Piero, who can conjure in a free kick, and

Fabrizio Ravanelli, who can blow houses down with his hunger. Against these, England's makeshift rearguard would need technique as well as durability. Hoddle admitted in training that England's need is "to breed defenders who have time on the ball".

However, these are musings. The tensions are mounting among players who may not themselves know for sure if they are playing at Wembley tonight. The edge in technique is with the Italians, the depth of character is English. Two coaches are trying to disguise their hand until the eleventh hour.

Leading from front, page 44
Peruzzi's honour, page 44
Scimeca steps up, page 45
Arsenal's plans, page 45

THE GUESSING GAME OF INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL



International football coaches believe the art of concealment is all. Glenn Hoddle and Cesare Maldini will not announce their line-ups for fear of giving their game away to one another. Will Hoddle really throw in Gascoigne after only two training sessions and 14 days idleness through ankle injury? One England play could be to open up Italy's catenaccio defence by (A) Ferdinand and Shearer drawing their markers wide. This would open up the area (B) where, possibly, the sweeper Peruzzi could be exposed either to Gascoigne preying on a scoring opportunity or McManaman running at the last defender. Beckham's service (C) from the right could spring the Italian trap.

Alas, poor Gascoigne. Not only is he unlikely to be fit for 90 minutes, data provided by Opta Index, with input from Don Howe, devastatingly dismantles his performance in the last World Cup qualifier against Georgia in Tbilisi. Gascoigne never had a shot, yet the one case for his inclusion is that he can conjure goals from the air, and has nine in 46 internationals for England. The alternatives? Barmby has three goals in 10 internationals, Merson one in 14, and Le Tissier, Fowler, Beckham and McManaman have never scored for their country.

THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST GASCOIGNE

FOR: In England's 2-0 victory over Georgia in the last World Cup qualifying match in October Gascoigne contributed 65 accurate short passes.

AGAINST: He failed with 8 attempted short passes and 4 attempted long passes, failed in 4 out of 6 dribbles, failed in 3 out of 4 tackles and gave away 3 throw-ins. On 22 occasions he lost possession, something England cannot afford to do tonight.

Johansson maintains position

By JOHN GOODBODY

LENNART JOHANSSON, the president of Uefa, hinted yesterday that he would still be supporting Germany's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup finals, despite the European governing body's pledge to give England an equal chance to earn its backing to hold the tournament. Johansson was speaking on the eve of a lunch to support the England bid, which will be hosted by John Major in Downing Street and attended by officials of Fifa, the world governing body, and foreign media.

Johansson said: "The members of the executive committee know what they wanted. I can't say whether anybody is going to change their mind. I have to remain objective, but that doesn't mean I am changing my mind. I know what decision I made and I know who was there."

Last Friday, Uefa agreed to withdraw its unequivocal support for Germany, which first announced in 1993 that it wanted to stage the 32-nation tournament. England said it would be bidding after the successful hosting of the European championship last summer, which made a record profit of more than £60 million.

Johansson told a German news agency: "I must say there has been a lack of communication since England first showed interest in the tournament. Both countries are capable of holding the competition. We have to do everything to avoid a confrontation between England and Germany. We are not happy with the situation."

Gerhard Aigner, the Uefa general secretary, told a German newspaper that he believed politics was playing a

role in England. He said that because of this, the German bid "had been overtaken on the inside".

As expected, no Uefa official will attend the lunch today. However, two leading Fifa figures — David Wili, of Scotland, and Dr Harry Been, of Holland — will be present. Luciano Nizzola, the Italian football federation president, will also be in attendance, as well as famous England players of the past, such as Sir Bobby Charlton, Gary Lineker and Sir Stanley Matthews.

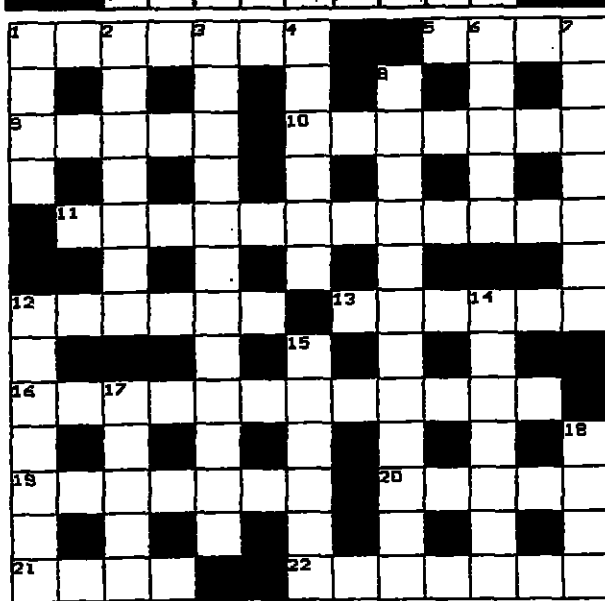
Bobby Robson, the former England manager, has been warned that he will lose his job as manager of Barcelona unless the team's results improve immediately. Pressure increased on Robson after his team were beaten 2-0 by Espanol in a derby match on Sunday.

Julian Fernandez, a club spokesman, said that Robson had been told that results must improve at a meeting on Monday evening. As he left the meeting, Robson said: "I'm aware that people may be looking for a culprit, but I'm not afraid that that culprit may be me."

The Madrid daily newspaper, *El Pais*, said Robson could be dismissed if Barcelona fail to beat Racing Santander on Sunday. Other Spanish newspapers have speculated that Tomislav Ivic or Carlos Rexach, Robson's assistant, will take over until the end of the season while the club carries out negotiations with Louis van Gaal, the Ajax coach, who is leaving the Dutch club at the end of the season.

Barcelona are in the quarter-finals of the European Cup Winners' Cup, but lie eight points behind Real Madrid in the Spanish league table.

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1015

ACROSS

- Discharge of random bullet (9-4)
- Repair (4)
- Nervous agitation (5)
- Solo ballet dance (3,4)
- Laudable (12)
- Thinly scattered (6)
- Scurrilous (6)
- Occasionally (4,2,1,5)
- Pouched-bill bird (7)
- Gerontius composer (5)
- Dip (eg biscuit in tea) (4)
- Meat (7)

DOWN

- Breathe hard; light cake (4)
- Greek restaurant (7)
- Tendency to group together (4,8)
- Intermittent-motion part (6)
- Bring to bear (5)
- Held up (7)
- Great surprise (12)
- Bent, lowered oneself (7)
- Declares, makes out (7)
- Riviera resort, has film festival (6)
- Two-dot mark; part of body (5)
- Nondescript colour (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1014

ACROSS: 1 Suck 3 Istanbul 8 Eclipse 10 Knock 11 Pros and cons 13 Seldom 15 Floral 17 Town and gown 20 Lemur 21 Chestnut 22 Phrasing 23 Spur
DOWN: 1 Sheepish 2 Cello 4 Steady 5 Acknowledge 6 Browner 7 Lake 9 Play on words 12 Clincher 14 Latimer 16 Caucasian 18 On tap 19 Clip

SOLUTION TO TIMES TWO CROSSWORD 1010

(In association with BRITISH MIDLAND)
ACROSS: 6 Cumulus 7 Armed 9 Ultra 10 Integer 11 Playing card 14 Estate agent 17 Shamble 19 Taste 21 Decor 22 Diamond
DOWN: 1 Smut 2 Pleasant 3 Aesop 4 Draft 5 Emigrant 6 Club 8 Dimple 11 Petrarch 12 Great War 13 Versed 15 Agenda 16 Wed. 18 Bare 20 Star

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Inflight service

Now airlines are catering for the notebook operation
PAGE 12



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